

Jon Armajani

MODERN ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS

History, Religion,
and Politics



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*For Mahvash, Robert Bahman, Lili, Cyrus, Maziar, Barbara,
and Siah with love and gratitude*

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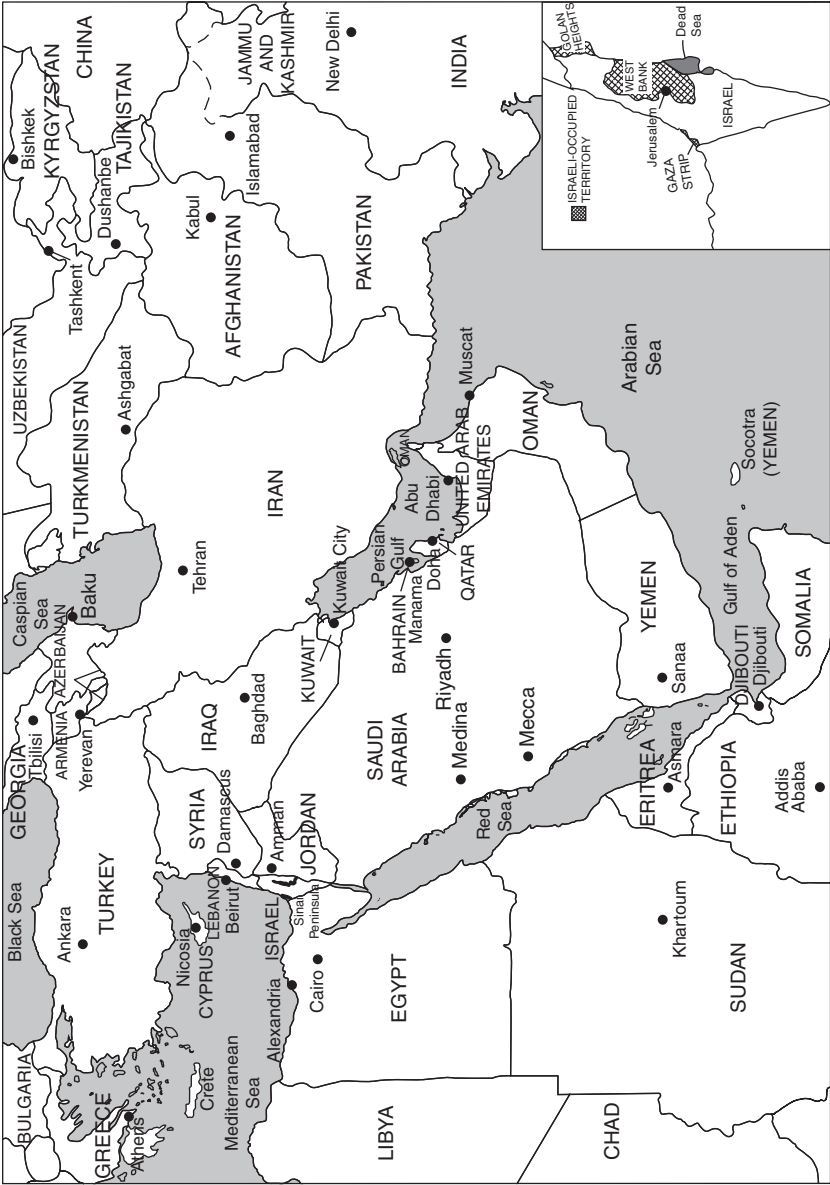
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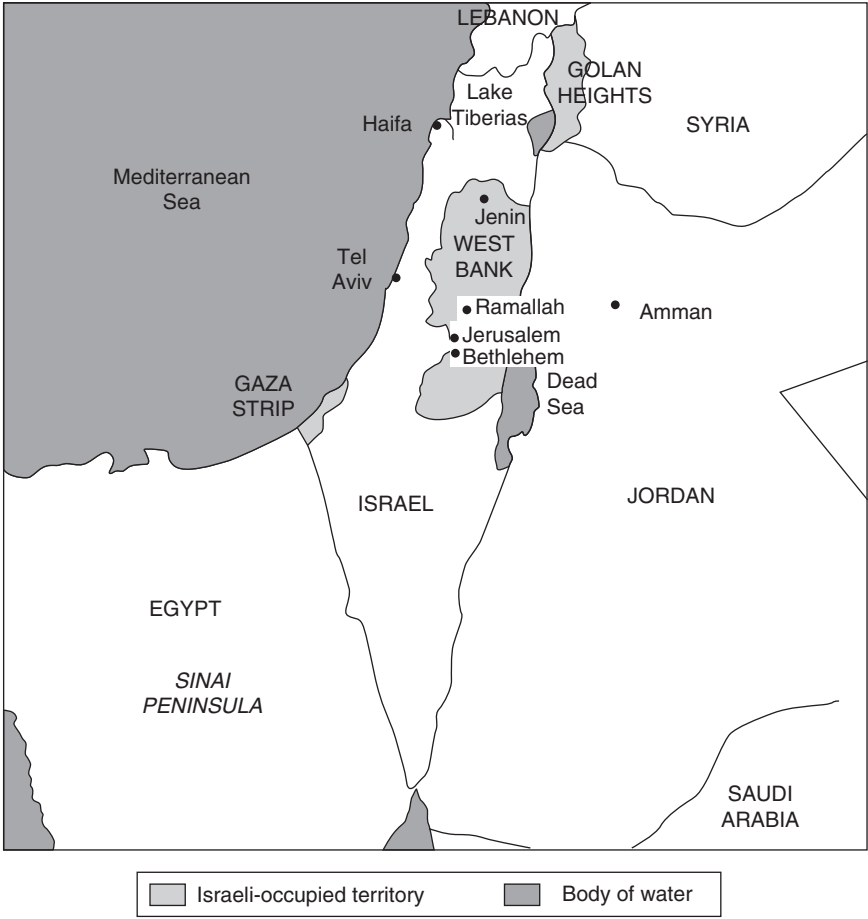
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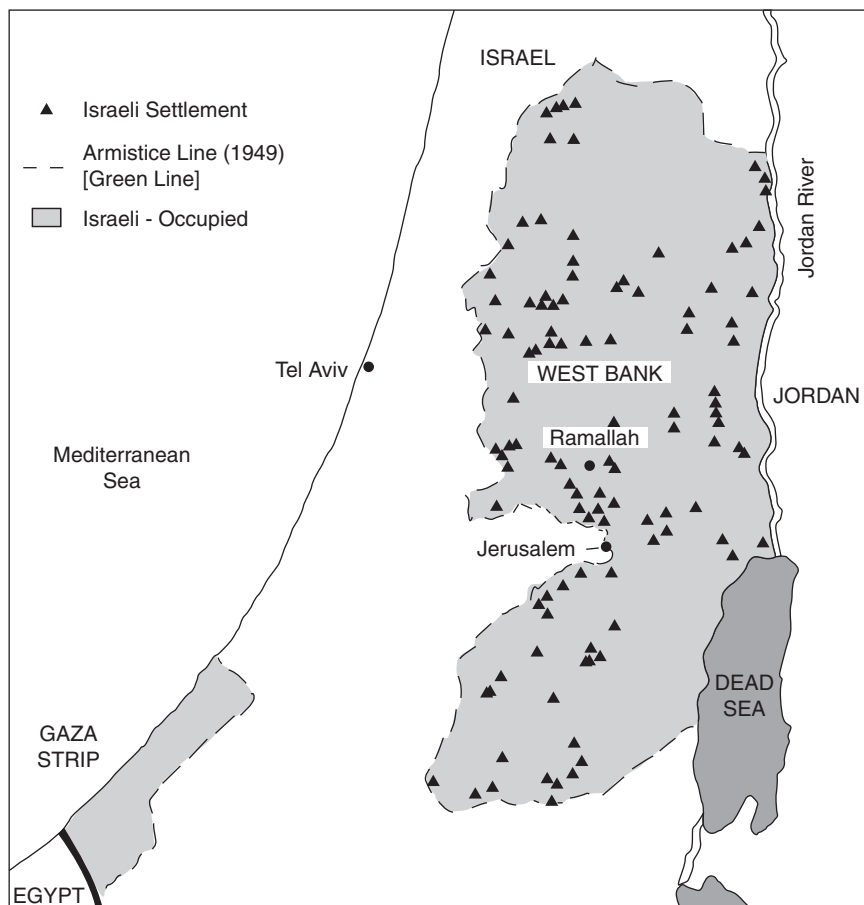
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Map 1 The Middle East



Map 2 Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip



Map 3 Israeli Settlements on the West Bank



Note: Not all of Afghanistan's provincial capitals appear on this map. Also, borders in and near Jammu and Kashmir are disputed.

Map 4 Afghanistan

Introduction

What we are seeing now is a radical international jihad that will be a potent force for many years to come.

The New York Times, June 16, 2002¹

Islamism is nothing new. It is rooted in long-standing currents within modern Islamic history. Alongside democracy, socialism, communism, monarchy, and autocratic authoritarianism, Islamism is one of modernity's most influential political and religious ideologies. Islamists, also known as "Islamic fundamentalists" and "Islamic revivalists" (among other designations) – assert that the literal truth of the Quran, Islam's most sacred text, together with its legal and ritual injunctions based on Islamic law (Sharia), must be applied to all Muslims and to religious minorities living in majority-Muslim countries.² Islamists also believe that: (1) Islamic principles must dictate every aspect of life, both personal and societal; (2) Islam contains the truth and that other religions are either false or of limited validity; (3) traditional rules must govern sexual relations (i.e., sex may only take place within heterosexual marriage and licit concubinage); and (4) Western and secular cultures promote a range of consumerist and permissive lifestyles which are antithetical to Islam. Thus, Islamism – the complex current which is this book's focus – is the reinflection and reaffirmation, in substantially changed political and socio-cultural settings, of time-honored forms of understanding and behavior. Yet, Islamists are not utterly opposed to every kind of change; rather, they maintain that change must be regulated by traditional beliefs and practices.³

2 *Modern Islamist Movements*

Islamist groups comprise one part of a modern trend, known as fundamentalism, which is also present within religions other than Islam. Broadly speaking, fundamentalism is the activist affirmation of specific beliefs and practices that define a religion in an absolutist and literalist manner. Among other characteristics, fundamentalism involves an effort to reform and implement the historical and textual interpretations, doctrines, and behaviors of religious persons in accordance with what the fundamentalists believe to be the essentials of their religion. Typically, fundamentalists attempt to formulate these ideas and then apply these ideals to themselves, to others within their religion, and to society at large.⁴

Within this context, Islamists including Usama bin Laden (1957–2011), members of his movement, al-Qaida, and other Islamists have reinterpreted the main ideals of Islam while mobilizing themselves – in the context of a well thought-out religious and political worldview – to subvert what they perceive to be the West’s imperialism and hegemony in the majority-Muslim world and elsewhere, and to create a global Islamic state under Islamic law. Islamism is not only a significant feature of the modern international religious and political landscape, it is one of the most influential forces within modern Islam.

The religio-political justifications for the September 11 attacks and the Islamic organizational structures which catalyzed them will dominate international affairs for the foreseeable future. In the aftermath of September 11, the United States government made dramatic long-term changes in its domestic budgets and legislation, law enforcement and intelligence services, foreign policy and military doctrines which – together with the opposing strength of Islamism – will drastically change the global political map for many years to come.⁵ This book examines the histories, worldviews, structures, and religiously-based rationales for violence within Islamist groups; it will explore various Islamist groups and their historic grievances against the West with a long time-horizon in view. Particular attention is devoted to the formative relationship between Islamist and Islamic intellectual trends from the eighteenth century until the present.

An Islamic Lexicon

There are approximately 1.57 billion Muslims in the world and 96 percent of them live in developing countries.⁶ Muslims form a majority in almost 50 nations, most of which stretch within a wide band from Morocco to Indonesia. The four countries with the world’s largest Muslim populations are Indonesia with approximately 203 million Muslims, Pakistan with 174 million, India with 161 million, and Bangladesh with 145 million.⁷ At the same time, more than 38.1 million Muslims live in Europe and roughly 2.5 million live in the

United States.⁸ Within this vast ethnic, linguistic, national, and regional diversity, there are aspects of Islamic history, practice, and belief which Sunni Muslims, who constitute roughly 90 percent of all Muslims worldwide, affirm as the basis of the religious tradition. Shiite Muslims, who comprise roughly 10 percent of the Muslim population worldwide, adhere to many of these principles as well. Muslims believe that one sovereign and merciful God of the entire universe (who revealed himself to all the prophets from Adam to Jesus) gave his final, supreme, and perfect revelation to the Prophet Muhammad from 610 to 632 in what is modern-day Saudi Arabia. This revelation is recorded in the Quran, Islam's most important sacred text. The Hadith, which also holds considerable authority, contains, among other things, what Muslims believe to be the sayings and actions of Muhammad, and these are models for Muslims collectively and individually.

Muslims believe in the oneness of God, the power of angels, the importance of the Jewish and Christian prophets and holy books, God's final judgment, and his complete sovereignty over the universe, all of which comprise the Five Pillars of Belief in Sunni Islam. Muslims also hold a number of practices in common. These Five Pillars of Islam (distinct from but related to the Five Pillars of Belief) consist of a public confession of faith which initiates a person into Islam (*shahada*), five prayers per day (*salat*), an annual offering of 2.5 percent of one's assets to be paid to a mosque or Muslim charity (*zakat*), fasting (*sawm*) during the daylight hours of Ramadan, and making the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia once in a person's lifetime if she or he is able (*hajj*). The months of Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Mecca fall during different times from year to year because the Islamic calendar is lunar, not solar like the Western Gregorian one.

The term Islam comes from the Arabic words for submission and peace (*salaam*). Muslims frequently say they have an individual and corporate obligation to submit to God and God's commands as found in the Quran, Hadith, and the example of the Prophet, find peace with God and within themselves, and create peace with each other and the world through submitting themselves completely to God and his commands. Indeed, for Muslims life is a gift that God has given earthly creatures. Thus, humans are to live in a spirit of submission to God, peace, and respect for life. As evidence of Islam's teachings on peace and mercy, Muslims often cite the Quran chapter 6 verse 54 (Quran 6:54) which states, "Peace be upon you. Your Lord has decreed mercy. If anyone among you commits evil through ignorance and then repents and mends his ways, he will find God forgiving and merciful." Yet, in spite of the unity which Muslims share, they vociferously debate issues such as Quranic interpretation, the role of Islam in political systems, and Islamic responses to modernity. Ideological groupings in the majority-Muslim world can be divided into the following

categories: Islamists, Muslim liberals, secularists, and “the floating middlers.”⁹ These viewpoints function as ideal types, based on complex and ambiguous realities in which the moral stances and dispositions of any single person may contain a combination of all, tending to gravitate toward one or the other viewpoint according to the issue involved.¹⁰

Al-Qaida’s form of Islam is one of the newest extensions of Islamism. One of several sources of al-Qaida’s origins was as an outgrowth of forms of Islamism present in Afghanistan in the early 1990s, soon after the Soviets retreated from there and as Bin Laden established al-Qaida during that time using Afghanistan as his headquarters. Al-Qaida has its intellectual roots in the thought of: (1) the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Egyptian Muslim scholars Ayman al-Zawahiri and Muhammad Atef; (2) the Saudi Muslim scholars Sheikhs al-Bahrani, Ulwan, and al-Rayan; and (3) a number of Islamic schools (madrasahs) in Pakistan.¹¹ While members of al-Qaida agree with other Islamists in almost every area, the members of al-Qaida emphasize a significant point to their ideological manifesto. They, like some other Islamists, have constructed arguments founded on their interpretation of the Quran, Hadith, and early Islamic history which justify violent attacks against the West and Western institutions.

Two of several interrelated Islamist organizations are al-Qaida and the Taliban. Although the Taliban and al-Qaida are separate organizations, the Taliban became the Islamist government in Afghanistan during the 1990s and al-Qaida is Bin Laden’s international guerrilla organization. These groups often cooperated with each other before and even after September 11; the Taliban provided al-Qaida a base of operations in Afghanistan, while Bin Laden and al-Qaida gave the Taliban financial and military support. The Taliban attempted to defeat the anti-Taliban Afghan rebels during that country’s civil war in the 1990s in part in order to create an Islamist state there, while al-Qaida’s main objective was to operate as an international Islamic guerilla organization which wanted to expand Islam in Afghanistan, Pakistan and throughout the rest of the world while launching violent attacks against Western interests with the hope of eventually establishing a global Islamic state.¹²

Liberal Islam constitutes an alternative interpretive stance to Islamism and, much like other Muslims, including the Islamists, liberal Muslims take seriously the most important foundations of Islam: the Quran, Muhammad’s life, the example of the first Muslims, and the Sharia.¹³ However, liberal Muslims reaffirm and reevaluate the significance of all these principles for modern life, viewing the Quran as God’s supreme revelation and believing it calls for human progress. They point to the Quran’s restrictions on slavery, its enhancement of women’s status, its limitations on the right of private vengeance, and its commands for beneficence, justice, equality, liberty, and social solidarity. For liberals, these ideals have propelled Muslims to make great leaps forward, beginning from Islam’s origins in the seventh century

until today. They do not want literal interpretations of the Quran to block Muslims from perceiving its most relevant meanings as God's perfect revelation. They believe Muslims must seek the underlying moral purposes of the Quran and Hadith, and that of the lives of Muhammad and early Muslims – grounding contemporary daily belief and conduct on that ethical thrust.¹⁴

In contrast, secularists maintain that individuals' religious or non-religious affiliations should have no political ramifications; any person should be able to hold any political office in the state and the legal status of all citizens must be equal.¹⁵ Secularists contend that the right to legislate rests with the people and its authorized representatives, while believing that contemporary utility is an overriding factor which can help determine the content of laws. Secular governments may draw on the Sharia for specific guidance where popular mores and consent demand, but ultimately for the secularists the Sharia is shaped by human beings, and both Sharia and human beings are subject to changing religious, social, political, and economic conditions.¹⁶

Alongside of and, at times, overlapping these groupings are the floating middleers. While they may believe in some core Islamic principles and even in secularism, at times they are open-minded regarding the accomplishments of the West, although harboring some resentment toward it, while, at other times, they may find themselves identifying very strongly with the objectives of individuals as different as Saddam Hussein and Usama bin Laden. Like many others in the majority-Muslim world, floating middleers take great pride in the religious, cultural, and literary achievements of Muslims throughout history and retain a deep sense of dignity about the relevance of Islam's legacy to current affairs. While they would strongly object to living under the rule of an Islamist government, the floating middleers often find themselves identifying with the grievances of Islamists. Cynicism frequently characterizes the attitudes of the floating middleers. They are skeptical of existing secular governments in the majority-Muslim world, of Islamism's or Islamic liberalism's potential to make positive changes, and, probably most of all, of the United States' objectives and influence in the Muslim world.

No matter which of these clusters forms the primary basis of a person's ideas, those living in the majority-Muslim world share a common understanding of the West's historical assaults against their region; this shared perspective may be foreign to those Westerners who may be unable to fathom the West's historic aggression against the Muslim world.

The September 11 Attacks: Acts of Self-Defense?

From the perspective of contemporary Muslims, a genealogy of Western assaults against Islam can begin with the Crusades which started in 1096 and, from this vantage point, had a shattering effect on relationships between

Islam and the West.¹⁷ For many modern-day Muslims, the Crusades embody the worst aspects of Christianity's belligerence and they stand as ominous portents of the West's arrogance and rampant militarism during the colonial and post-colonial eras.¹⁸ Modern Muslims' interpretations of the Crusades as being part of the West's evil onslaught against majority-Muslim lands seem to have come into existence near the end of the nineteenth century. For various reasons, it seems before that time the vast majority of Muslims possessed limited knowledge of the Crusades, and before the twentieth century the Crusades played a relatively minor role in Muslims' understandings of Islam's relationship with the West. Modern Muslim conceptions of the Crusades as part of a grand narrative that depicted those wars as a crucial part of the West's ongoing assault against Islam could have been influenced by such realities as Joseph-François Michaud's *Histoire des croisades* (which appeared between 1812 and 1822), Sir Walter Scott's *The Talisman* (which was published in 1825), and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany's visit to Damascus in 1898. These entities seem to have had an influence on Western thinking about the Crusades, and the imagined conceptions of the Crusades that these works and events conveyed seem to have been spread among modern Muslims through various kinds of schools and media in the Middle East and other parts of the majority-Muslim world. During the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the idea that the Crusades were part of the West's ongoing warfare against Muslims gained currency among the vast majority of modern Muslims, and various Islamist groups adopted this conception of history as part of their own anti-Western narratives. Thus, it has been argued that the Muslim, and oftentimes Western, belief that the Crusades are part of the West's long-standing, constant warfare against Islam could be conceived, in some respects, as an imagined history, whose ideas could be attributable to nineteenth- and twentieth-century reconstructions of the Crusades which were transmuted to Westerners and Muslims.¹⁹

The Crusades consisted of several European military offensives extending from the eleventh to the sixteenth century (and, for some historians, beyond that) when the Christian armies of the West battled Muslims of the Middle East.²⁰ Fearing the marauding Turkomen bands in the wake of the Seljukid conquest of Baghdad in 1055, Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus called upon fellow Christian rulers and the Pope to counter this Islamic tide by engaging in a military assault to wrest Jerusalem and its environs from Muslim rule.²¹ In a similar spirit, Pope Urban II called for the beginning of the Crusades in 1095 when he commanded European Christians to liberate Constantinople, Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and other areas in the Middle East (including locations where Christians were living under Islamic rule) from the Muslims.²²

Unprepared for Christendom's invasion, the Muslims' initial acts of self-defense were ineffectual. The first Crusaders captured Jerusalem in

1099 and occupied it until Saladin's (Salah al-Din's) military reconquered it in 1187.²³ During this period, the battles were virulent and devastating. After that, the momentum remained with the Muslims. By the thirteenth century, the Crusades had degenerated into Christian in-fighting.²⁴ By 1453, Muslim armies had taken over Constantinople (which would be renamed Istanbul in the 1920s) and made it the seat of the Muslim caliph, marking the expansion of Islam over almost all of Asia Minor.²⁵ The Ottoman Empire from this time to the onset of British and French colonialism constituted one of Islam's high points culturally, architecturally, and literarily.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Islam's fortunes had reversed and Muslims faced the threats of European colonialist expansion. While during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the threats to Islam's identity and unity were mostly internal, in the subsequent periods Muslims confronted the West's incursions. France, Britain, and Russia in particular influenced the Middle East and Central Asia politically, economically, culturally, and morally during and after their colonialist period which began to end at the conclusion of World War II. Muslims believe that the Western countries exploited the majority-Muslim world for their own material and financial benefit in ways that allowed the West to progress to the detriment of most Muslims. British and French citizens who lived in the Muslim world established separate neighborhoods and distinct laws, and enjoyed much higher incomes and standards of living than most of their Muslim counterparts. The colonialists' ostentatious displays of privilege compounded Muslims' frustrations. As Western powers expanded their influence during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Muslims reinterpreted their sacred texts and histories, while revitalizing their religious institutions, in response to the rapidly changing circumstances. Islamism is one of the most striking manifestations of this response.

Near the end of World War II as British and French colonialist influence in the Middle East and North Africa (among other regions) began to wane, the United States became a major power in those and some other majority-Muslim areas. According to many Muslims, the most visible and violent example of the United States' intervention in that part of the world has been its military, economic, and political support of Israel in such a way that it has empowered Israel to occupy Palestinian lands, stripping Palestinians of their livelihood, education, autonomy, and dignity.²⁶ The British played a significant role in bringing the modern state of Israel to life through the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the same year their occupation of Palestine began. They were continuously involved in that area until Israel's creation in 1948. Muslims view the United States as the most powerful supporter of Israel after that time.²⁷

In their opposition to many Israeli and American policies in the Middle East, many Muslims would state that the United States provides Israel with

\$3.65 billion in foreign aid annually, making it the largest foreign recipient of American aid.²⁸ They say that the United States has played a leading role in making Israel (which has a population of 6.5 million and covers 8,020 square miles) the fourth largest military in the world, while consistently blocking United Nations resolutions and other diplomatic overtures harmful to Israel's interest.²⁹ Over the course of half a century, Muslims throughout the world have watched in horror as Israel – with the expressed support of the United States – has killed thousands of Palestinians and occupied the West Bank and Gaza. Muslims often say that since the first Jewish settlers arrived in Palestine in the early twentieth century, Palestinians have seen their properties expropriated, their equal opportunities for education, careers, and medical care hindered, while their friends and family members have been killed, unjustly imprisoned, and tortured by the Israeli military and government.³⁰ Muslims who oppose Israel's policies also state that since the Israelis' occupation of the West Bank and Gaza began in 1967, the Israeli Defense Force has blocked Palestinian ambulances in emergency situations, has bulldozed Palestinian homes, and has made the killing of Palestinians a daily occurrence.³¹ Critics of these Israeli policies say that since the second uprising (or intifada) against Israeli occupation began in September 2000, more than three times as many Palestinians have been killed as Israelis.³²

Among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, 30 percent live under the poverty line, in contrast to 16 percent of Israelis, and average life expectancy for Palestinians is approximately seven years less than that of Israelis.³³ In addition, Muslims would state that the Palestinians have been forced to watch as the Israelis have diverted their dwindling West Bank water supplies toward swimming pools, flower gardens, and broad expanses of green lawn in Israeli settlements on the West Bank, while, in the meantime, a large number of Palestinian communities have had little or no running water.³⁴ Muslims who oppose Israel's policies toward the Palestinians would point to United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan's statement that Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is illegal, and South African anti-apartheid activist the Revd Desmond Tutu's observation that Israel's policies toward the Palestinians are tantamount to apartheid.³⁵

Many Israelis and supporters of Israel view the situation differently. They state that British and American backing of Israel has never been automatic. They refer to repeated instances where Jews and Israelis have had to work very hard to garner support for their cause. Those who support this argument would, for example, point to the harsh military and political restrictions which the British placed on Jewish immigration to Palestine during the time leading to Israel's independence in 1948.³⁶ One of many examples of British recalcitrance was the British navy's violent military seizure in 1947 of the Palestine-bound ship *Exodus-1947*, which contained 4,500 Jewish holocaust survivors who wanted to immigrate to Palestine, forcing it to turn back to

Europe where the Jews on board were placed in displaced persons camps.³⁷ This attack, which was part of a larger British naval blockade in the Mediterranean that sought to disrupt the immigration of Jews to Palestine, resulted in the deaths of three *Exodus-1947* passengers and the wounding of approximately 100 Jews.³⁸

Many supporters of Israel would also say that the financial, political, and military aid which it has received from the United States and other countries is well deserved since Israel is surrounded by hostile or potentially hostile neighbors and requires a strong military to defend itself.³⁹ In making this observation, at least some Israelis would refer to the \$2 billion per year the United States grants to Egypt, the continued strength of that Arab nation's military, and the possibility that if a government hostile to Israel comes to power there, it may launch an attack against Israel.⁴⁰ Israel's backers also state that it is surrounded by other untrustworthy countries such as Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Substantial evidence indicates that Syria's government – which also has enormous influence in Lebanon – has trained and backed groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and other violent organizations that have perpetrated constant attacks, killing and wounding hundreds of Israelis.⁴¹ Many of these anti-Israeli assailants receive backing from other majority-Muslim countries where they receive enormous popular and governmental support.⁴² Israel and its allies state that American backing of Israel is one very helpful countervailing force to the tremendous aggression Israel confronts on a daily basis.⁴³

Advocates of this argument also believe that Israel must protect itself against other hostile countries such as Iran, which has weapons of mass destruction and supports Palestinian militant groups.⁴⁴ Those who back Israeli policy toward the Palestinians state that when it has come to making peace with the Israelis, Palestinians and other Arabs have “never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity.”⁴⁵ According to this position, Israeli leaders throughout history have been ready to make peace with Middle Eastern countries and organizations, yet repeatedly those bodies have reacted to Israel's peaceful desires by responding negatively or by making war with Israel. Many Israelis and their supporters would point to the wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973 as obvious cases where Israel had to respond militarily to either hostile threats or actions from its neighbors.⁴⁶ They would also state that when Yasir Arafat, the President of the Palestinian Authority, had the chance to enter into peace agreements with the Israelis during the first and second Camp David meetings (in 1978 and 1999 respectively), he refused.⁴⁷ In addition, Israel has implemented aggressive measures vis-à-vis the Palestinians so it can defend itself against repeated belligerent actions including suicide bombings against hundreds of innocent Israeli civilians and soldiers.⁴⁸ Most Israelis are particularly alarmed by the Palestinian suicide assaults against Israelis in the heart of Israel and in West

Bank settlements that began in September 2000 (after Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem) and have brought overwhelming death, injury, and fear to Israelis.⁴⁹ In response to foreign criticism against Israel's policies, such as those of Kofi Annan and Desmond Tutu, many Israelis and their supporters state that defense of Israel is a matter of Jewish and Israeli survival and that Israelis and other Jews will never again allow themselves to be victims of pogroms or another holocaust.⁵⁰

There are wide varieties of viewpoints among Israelis, Palestinians, and their advocates; these are general contours of some arguments on the "pro-Palestinian" and "pro-Israeli" sides. Islamists and many other Palestinian sympathizers, which include most Muslims, often disregard many of the Israeli concerns, their historical experiences, and their justifications for their actions. Thus, Islamists and most other Muslims emphasize the injustices which they believe the Palestinians have suffered while ignoring those of Jews and Israelis. These Muslims state that the West's hostility toward Islam during the Crusades and modern Israel's history are just part of the wider Western assault upon Islam.

There are additional dimensions to Muslims' grievances against the West. According to many Muslims, American involvement in Iran from the end of World War II until its Islamic revolution in 1979 is another instance of American interference in the majority-Muslim world. In 1953, the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) organized and helped launch a coup against the elected government of Muhammad Mossadegh (1880–1967) and, after his overthrow, restored Muhammad Reza Shah (1919–80), who ruled Iran from 1941 to 1951 and again from 1953 to 1979, to Iran's throne. Additionally, the CIA trained and financed Muhammad Reza Shah's secret police SAVAK, created in 1957, which imprisoned, tortured, and spied on thousands of Iranians who were or were perceived to be opposed to the Shah's regime. According to many Muslims, in addition to many other crimes the CIA committed in Iran, they supported a corrupt monarchical government which: (1) siphoned hundreds of millions of dollars into the Shah's personal bank accounts; (2) contributed to an ever-widening gap between the rich and poor; and (3) did very little to provide economic and educational opportunities to the vast majority of Iranians. At the same time – according to this perspective – the United States provided consistent broad-ranging support to an autocratic monarch who ruled by fiat alone, disregarding parliamentary procedures and the will of Iran's majority.⁵¹

Evidence of what Muslims perceive to be the United States' ongoing twentieth- and twenty-first-century "war against Islam" includes that nation's brutal military and political policies with respect to Iraq during and after the first Gulf War. Although some moderate Muslims believed that the Allies were justified in ejecting the Iraqi military from Kuwait in 1991, large numbers of Muslims vehemently opposed the subsequent American

policy toward Iraq which imposed “no-fly zones” in the northern and southern thirds of Iraqi air space. These American and British over-flights involved frequent bombings of Iraqi military and communications facilities and – together with the first and second Gulf Wars and the intermittently reduced food and medical supplies resulting from economic sanctions – caused the deaths of possibly more than 500,000 children and thousands of other Iraqi citizens, according to estimates from the United Nations and other international organizations.⁵²

Soon after the end of the first Gulf War, the United States stationed, on what seemed to be a permanent basis, 5,000 soldiers in Saudi Arabia,⁵³ which for Muslims is the most sacred land in Islam and the country they believe must protect two of Islam’s holiest cities. The holiest city for Muslims is Mecca, Muhammad’s hometown, the site of many Quranic revelations, and the location of the Kaba – the immense three-story tall black cubic structure toward which Muslims pray five times per day and to which they journey in the hajj. The second most sacred city is Medina, 200 miles north of Mecca, to which Muhammad and the early Muslim community emigrated in 622, where Muhammad built Islam’s first mosque, fought several of Islam’s major battles, and where he and several others of Islam’s most important early figures are buried.⁵⁴

Muslims believe the second successor to Muhammad, the caliph Umar (d. 644), prohibited all non-Muslims from entering the Arabian peninsula in order to keep it pure and unpolluted from their presence; many contemporary Muslims believe that this regulation should be tightly enforced into perpetuity. Since the emergence of Islam, Muslims have taken great pride in their own ability to defend their lands – sacred or otherwise – from invaders and in their capacity for either preventing non-Muslims from entering those areas or imposing severe restrictions on those non-Muslims who do.⁵⁵ Today, many Muslims believe that the United States, through its antagonistic actions and as the current imperial power, is endangering the liberty, freedom, and family values of Muslims throughout the majority-Muslim world.

Before the second Gulf War, the stationing of more than 5,000 American soldiers in Saudi Arabia was deeply offensive to Muslims – particularly to the members of al-Qaida, other Islamists, and some other Muslims – in at least three ways. First, they considered the American soldiers to be non-Muslim infidels who were in Saudi Arabia to protect American imperialist aims in the region. Second, Muslims who opposed the United States’ military presence there believed that these soldiers were, through *their very presence*, polluting Islamic sacred lands. Third, by permitting the American troops to be stationed in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi government was allying itself with the most powerful superpower which had already exhibited its desire to destroy Islam. According to Muslims who have maintained this position, the Saudi government, which has historically taken the responsibility of

guarding the Islamic sacred lands, has betrayed Muslims by siding with their greatest enemy, the United States.⁵⁶

Yet, the grievances of Islamists and many other Muslims are not limited to the United States' military and political involvement in the region. Their objections also relate to American and Western influence in various cultural spheres within majority-Muslim countries. These Muslims believe that Western influence in majority-Muslim societies' educational and economic systems, in gender relations, and in moral domains has severely damaged Islamic values and structures. There are a number of specific ways in which the West's destructive influence has made itself evident. The most obvious forms of this influence are manifested in Western movies, television shows, magazines, books, and music which portray sex and sexuality in ways that dishonor the Islamists' views of Islam, while promoting greed and consumerism.⁵⁷

For Islamists, certain educational systems – particularly those supported by secular governments in majority-Muslim countries and by Western organizations there – have continually undercut Islamic teachings in every area of life, while helping to spearhead the West's assault against Islam. These secular and/or Christian educational institutions either teach Christianity (a religion which falls short of Islam's perfection) and/or they educate their students in Western history, literature, and science from perspectives which deny the Quran's dominance over all realms of knowledge. For Islamists, Islamic educational institutions must wholeheartedly reject Western-based content within all academic disciplines in favor of subject matter that is grounded in Islam and can be devoted to its propagation.⁵⁸ All these issues and their related grievances – which resonate with large segments of the Muslim populace – form the context for many Islamists', including al-Qaida's, understanding of jihad.

Many Jihads

The Arabic root of the term jihad means to strive or struggle and for Muslims this meaning is translated as a dutiful commitment to God and the Muslim community. Although, during Islam's history, modern Muslims have defined jihad in a multiplicity of ways, they have tended to conceptualize jihad mainly in two modes: the greater (or internal) jihad and the lesser (or external) jihad. Yet, as David Cook and others have argued, this dichotomy does not seem to be a consistent theme during the pre-modern periods.⁵⁹ Yet, for some modern Muslims, internal jihad means trying to do one's duty to God in every detail of one's life, while maintaining a continual consciousness of God's oneness and Muhammad's role as the final Prophet. This jihad also involves remaining steadfast in one's adherence to the Five Pillars of

Islam and Belief and God's other commands.⁶⁰ During the course of Islamic history, different Muslims have viewed these and other kinds of jihad differently. It has been argued, for example, that during various periods in Islamic history, Muslims have viewed the internal jihad as a way of purifying Muslims for the external or military form of jihad, which has predominated. Also, on the whole, Islamists focus on the external or military form of jihad and have a tendency to downplay the distinction between internal and external jihad, although virtually all forms of Islamic piety are very important to them.⁶¹

Yet, this internal striving goes much deeper than matters of ritual and belief. For observant Muslims, every minute of one's life must be devoted to this greater jihad. One's choice of clothing should be modest so as not to elicit sexual interest. Muslims are not permitted to engage in sex outside of heterosexual marriage. Strict adherents to Islam's codes avoid contact with persons of the opposite sex who are not their spouses or relatives. A Muslim must be certain that the food she or he eats, the cookware within which it is prepared, and the utensils with which it is eaten are in full compliance with Islamic halal dietary regulations (which are similar to Jewish kosher rules and involve specific rules governing the manner in which food is slaughtered, cooked, and consumed). Muslims must also treat family members and everyone else with whom they have contact in a spirit of peace, goodwill, respect, generosity, and seriousness in full accord with the teachings of the Quran and the supreme example of Muhammad and early Muslims as found in the Hadith.⁶²

Jihad's secondary meaning, the lesser jihad, refers to the duty which Muslims have to defend themselves physically under at least two conditions: (1) when the Islamic community is either experiencing attack or under the potential threat of outside invasion and/or (2) when Muslims are experiencing injustice. Typically, this form of jihad involves physical self-defense of the Muslim community (umma) and not an obligation for Muslims to take unprovoked aggressive actions against anyone whom they generally perceive to be an enemy. Paradigms which Muslims have used historically to justify this lesser jihad, or Islamic self-defense, are the battles in which Muhammad engaged during the early Islamic community's Medinan period (622–32). During that time, Muhammad and the early Muslims successfully defended themselves from internal betrayals and/or non-Muslim attackers on three occasions: during the Battle of Badr in 623, the Battle of Uhud in 625, and the Battle of Khandaq (the Trench) in 627. In each case, Muslims believe the entire Muslim community was under the threat of complete destruction and as a result of God's favor and Muhammad's military prowess his armies protected themselves and their religion from annihilation.⁶³ Muslims also point to Islamic self-defense against the Crusaders beginning in the twelfth century and against the invading Mongols in the thirteenth century as other paradigms for the lesser jihad.⁶⁴

According to this interpretation, there are Quranic injunctions – in addition to the actions of the Prophet Muhammad – which clearly justify militarily defending the umma when it is under attack. Proponents of this interpretation cite passages such as Quran 2:227, “Except those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of Allah, and defend themselves only after they are unjustly attacked. And soon will the unjust assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take.” Quran 42:39 is also frequently cited, “And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves.”⁶⁵ Although Muslims debate whether American military and political involvement in the Middle East justifies the invocation of historic paradigms and Quranic passages such as these, members of al-Qaida and their sympathizers used that reasoning to validate the September 11 attacks and other strikes against Western interests and Israel.⁶⁶

More specifically, members of al-Qaida in particular declare that much like Muhammad and the early Muslims who were under attack in Medina by invaders seeking to destroy Islam, modern Muslims have been subjected to military, political, economic, and cultural attacks by the West and must resort to lesser jihad to defend their religion, their nations, their families, and themselves. Members of al-Qaida and their sympathizers assert that the September 11 attacks constituted this form of lesser jihad – warfare for the purpose of self-defense. For them, the examples of the Crusades are just as timely. Muslims are justified in defending themselves because the Western threats against Islam are as destructive today as they were 900 years ago. Then and now, an external attack against one part of the umma constitutes an attack against the whole, and Muslims must unite to preserve Islam lest it be utterly destroyed.⁶⁷ While Muslims have been involved in heated debates over the legitimacy of the September 11 attacks, it would be difficult to deny that Bin Laden, his interpretation of Islam, his actions against the United States’ Middle East policy, and his declaration of a war of Islamic self-defense against the United States, won millions of sympathizers across the world.⁶⁸

Another justification for the lesser jihad, under certain circumstances, is to spread Islam. In other words, according to this argument in favor of lesser jihad, if non-Muslims do not become Muslims as a result of peaceful persuasion, Muslims are permitted – and in some of these cases they see themselves as being obliged – to use violent means to spread Islam: “When the sacred months are over slay the idolaters wherever you find them. Arrest them, besiege them, and lie in ambush everywhere for them. If they repent and take to prayer and render the arms levy, allow them to go their way. God is forgiving and merciful” (Quran 9:5). Quran 2:191 is also interpreted

as legitimizing the use of force either against all non-Muslims or as a means of spreading Islam:

Slay them wherever you find them. Drive them out of the places from which they drove you. Idolatry is more grievous than bloodshed. But do not fight them within the precincts of the Holy Mosque unless they attack you there; if they attack you put them to the sword. Thus shall the unbelievers be rewarded: but if they mend their ways, know that God is forgiving and merciful.

In any case, one persistent belief is that war can be mounted against unbelievers only after they have been called upon to become Muslims:

Whenever the Prophet appointed a commander to an army or expedition, he would say: "When you meet your heathen enemies, summon them to three things. Accept whatsoever they agree to and refrain then from fighting them. Summon them to become Muslims. If they agree, accept their conversion. In that case summon them to move from their territory to the Abode of the Emigrants [i.e., Medina]. If they refuse that, let them know that then they are like the Muslim Bedouins and that they share only in the booty, when they fight together with the [other] Muslims. If they refuse conversion, then ask them to pay the poll-tax (*jizya*) If they agree, accept their submission. But if they refuse, then ask God for assistance and fight them."⁶⁹

Many Muslims view these passages as having justified the spread of Islam by violent means beginning as early as the seventh century. While jihad as Islamic self-defense was the primary justification for the September 11 attacks, Bin Laden also hoped that the attacks would inspire non-Muslims to take an increased interest in the religion and convert to it.⁷⁰ He also believed that he provided Westerners ample warning regarding al-Qaida's impending attacks.⁷¹

Usama bin Laden and Religious Poetics

Such religiously-based narratives of political resistance are not exclusive to Islam. Throughout the twentieth century, revolutionary groups have legitimized, strengthened, consolidated, and catalyzed their movements through religious poetics.⁷² Religious poetics involve an oppressed group's reinterpreting and redeploying of classic myths, rituals, and symbols in ways that sanctify the group's strategies and goals so that its members may pursue their objectives with a deeper sense of ultimate religious meaning. Religious poetics sacralize, reinforce, and reenergize the multi-leveled meanings of religious and political resistance.

Modern religious and political life is full of instances where groups have utilized religious poetics. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X harnessed

ideas and rituals from Christianity and Islam during the civil rights movement, while the Dalai Lama has reworked the language of Tibetan Buddhism to focus its resistance to China's domination of Tibet.⁷³ Some Chicanas and Chicanos have used the narratives and rituals of Roman Catholicism and the indigenous traditions of Mexico to reauthenticate their identities, reinforce their sense of community, and solidify their religio-political bonds.⁷⁴ During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Zionists reconfigured and recontextualized ancient Israelite and Jewish symbols in order to mobilize many Jews to create and sustain the modern state of Israel.⁷⁵ Desmond Tutu as well as other black and white South African Christians reinvented Christianity to serve as a potent mode of resistance against apartheid.⁷⁶

Thus, as Bin Laden attempted to justify and institutionalize his religiously-based political critiques of the West, he engaged in a similar religious poetical endeavor to that of numerous other twentieth-century revolutionaries. His use of religious poetics infused his declarations with force and persuasiveness in the eyes of millions of Muslims throughout the world. Even Muslims who usually disagree with Islamists and dread the remotest possibility of living under such regimes sometimes found themselves resonating emotionally with Bin Laden's viewpoints and anti-Western grievances.⁷⁷ His use of religious poetics explains one aspect of his appeal, but that is just part of the story.

Primordial Sentiments and Islamic Totems: Islamism, al-Qaida, and Contemporary Muslims

How can one explain Usama bin Laden's popularity among some Muslims, at least some of whom do not formally identify with Islamism and are often at odds with its objectives? Primordial sentiments provide one answer. These thoughts and feelings are the givens of social existence involving immediate contiguity and sometimes even the feelings of familial connection. They stem from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a common language, or even a dialect of a language, and/or following shared social practices.⁷⁸ These similarities in speech, custom, religion, and/or related matters carry tremendous persuasiveness in and of themselves. Individuals are bound to their family members and neighbors, for example, "ipso facto – as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself."⁷⁹

Primordial sentiments are relevant to contemporary Islam (and other forms of religion and even nationalism), generally, and some Muslims' positive responses to Bin Laden more specifically. Muslims' understandings of Bin Laden's courageous opposition to the United States and their perceptions of his heroic stances in defense of Islam appeal to some of the

deepest Muslim beliefs pertaining to their dignity, pride, honor, and overall worth as individuals and as a transnational community. To the extent that Muslims believe the United States virulently assaulted Islam during the latter half of the twentieth century, Bin Laden represented a towering figure who bravely stood up for Islam as a religion, a civilization, and a culture.⁸⁰

He also commanded a totemic appeal. A totem is a person or object that embodies the most sacred ideals of a clan, society, or religion. While for some classic social theorists totems were animals or objects to which “primitive” peoples attached their most potent yearnings, today some political, religious, and even artistic and athletic figures possess totemic qualities.⁸¹ Admirers have revered such individuals as Mao Tse-tung, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Che Guevara, Elvis Presley, and Michael Jordan. Marketers and supporters have either commodified their images in ways that reflected their ideals or have found other ways to sacralize their lives. The likenesses of some of these leaders have appeared on posters, coffee mugs, t-shirts, and bumper stickers. The lives and ideals of others have been sanctified through routinized festivals, holidays, pilgrimages, and public speeches.

Bin Laden’s totemic appeal was similar. Contemporary Muslim children have said they want to be like Bin Laden when they become adults, while his image appeared on souvenirs and various household items.⁸² As the very figure of Bin Laden constituted a contemporary Islamic totem, he drew on pre-existing totems within Muslims’ collective unconscious to both convey his message and legitimate his status as their spokesperson. For instance, many media images of Bin Laden portrayed him with a long beard, turban, and flowing Islamic garb – all of which resound keenly for Muslims. For the more than 20 years Bin Laden lived in and shuttled into and out of Afghanistan, he consistently projected himself as living in full accord with the Prophet Muhammad’s example. Before Bin Laden was killed, photographs and television images often showed him residing in simple dwellings, surrounded by calligraphic quotations from the Quran, while sitting on the floor (true to traditional Islamic and Middle Eastern custom), eating modest amounts of apparently halal food. After Bin Laden’s death, however, it became apparent that the surroundings in which he lived, for at least the last seven years of his life, were more comfortable than the image he had attempted to convey.⁸³ Bin Laden’s frequent references to Islamic sacred texts, to the profaning of Islamic sacred spaces by the United States’ military, and to the denigration of Muslims’ pride resulting from the West’s aggression also carried a totemic appeal.⁸⁴ At the same time, since approximately 2003, Muslims’ attitudes toward Bin Laden became increasingly mixed, with apparent decreases in his popularity since that year, while, in contrast, there were vocal demonstrations supporting him after he was killed.⁸⁵

Members of al-Qaida make use of other totems too. They embed their own contemporary life histories within Islam's sacred myths. Weaving Bin Laden's and al-Qaida's narratives into the patterns of Islam's sacred history has enabled al-Qaida and its sympathizers to see the movement as having greater legitimacy and meaning. For instance, the Meccans forced Muhammad and his early community to emigrate from Mecca in 622 (i.e., engage in the hijra) and to live in Medina for eight years, leading raids against those who attacked his burgeoning Islamic community there. Muhammad returned triumphantly to Mecca in 630. According to members of al-Qaida and their sympathizers, like the seventh-century prophet, Bin Laden left a "hypocritical and idolatrous" location – in his case it was Saudi Arabia – as he engaged in a modern-day hijra to Afghanistan, where he engaged in acts of Islamic self-defense against the invading Soviet infidels there.⁸⁶

The members of al-Qaida elaborated this sacred narrative. Much as the small armies of the seventh- and eighth-century Muslim Arabians defeated the mammoth military of the Persian Empire (whose state religion was Zoroastrianism) to the northeast of the Arabian peninsula, so the members of al-Qaida, as they viewed it, defeated the "atheistic" Soviet military in Afghanistan, liberating that nation and placing it (or restoring it) under Islam's banner. Much as Islam's early caliphs (Muhammad's successors) conquered much of the Byzantine Empire (whose state religion was Christianity) in Islam's early years, acquiring that Empire's provinces from Syria through all of North Africa, so too the members of al-Qaida hope that their efforts will overturn what they perceive to be the American Crusader empire.⁸⁷ Bin Laden drew upon a panoply of totemic and sacred imagery in composing his religious poetics. This highly textured discourse legitimated his ideas in the eyes of many Muslims and appealed to their most profound emotions and frustrations. At the same time, his perspectives were grounded within and constituted one logical extension of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century Islamic thought.

Theorizing Religious Violence

Mark Juergensmeyer and René Girard are two of many scholars whose works examine the relationship between myths, rituals, symbols and legitimizations of religious violence. Juergensmeyer examines religious violence among contemporary Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and Buddhists. As militants from these religions, the members of al-Qaida included, justify and perpetrate their acts of religious violence, the sacred narratives they construct and the targets they choose are imbued with multivalent religious meanings. These activists seek precedents from violent aspects of their religions'

histories.⁸⁸ They consistently believe that “their communities are already under attack – are being violated – and that their acts are therefore simply responses to the violence they have experienced.”⁸⁹ These militant groups’ violent attacks are “performance events,” in that they attempt to make symbolic statements, and “performative acts” in that they attempt to change policy, as they choose targets with symbolic potency which can reach intended audiences with the messages the attackers hope to convey.⁹⁰ By martyrizing themselves and demonizing their opponents, members of such organizations perceive themselves as engaged in cosmic wars where the fate of their religion and the whole of humanity hang in the balance.⁹¹ As the members of al-Qaida reinterpret the narratives which legitimate their movement and its violent strikes against the West, they are involved in this same Juergensmeyerian cross-cultural phenomenon. They choose targets with enormous symbolic value for Americans – United States embassies, an American naval vessel and military installations, the Pentagon, and the World Trade Center – and then extol the greatness of the Islamic “martyrs” who engaged in these acts, declaring “Islamic victory” against the “infidels” after the assaults.⁹² Yet, the scale of al-Qaida’s use of violence is global in nature and it has been argued that the scope of their goals and violent acts may be greater than those of certain other religio-political groups that use violence in attempts to achieve their goals.⁹³

René Girard discusses the ways in which the use of myth, ritual, and symbol decriminalizes religious persons’ acts of killing while raising those apparently murderous behaviors to the highest levels of obligation. For him, religiously-sanctioned acts of violence are not only permitted, some religious persons believe they are utterly obligatory.⁹⁴ In this vein, the members of al-Qaida are not only sacralizing violence, they are making it a requirement when they declare the frequently repeated sentence, “It is better to die in honor than live in humiliation.”⁹⁵ They are also declaring the obligatory nature of sacrificing themselves for their cause when they make parallels between the situation they confront as Muslims today and the circumstances which previous Muslims faced when they battled Muhammad’s enemies in Medina in the seventh century, the Crusaders beginning in the twelfth century, and the invading Mongols in the thirteenth century. According to this reasoning, Muslims were and are obliged, under certain conditions, to sacrifice their lives to protect Islamic lands.⁹⁶ Muslim soldiers and contemporary activists receive rewards as a result of their sanctified sacrifices: they gain the satisfaction of working to kill the infidels and playing a role in establishing their vision of justice in the world, while eventually spending eternity in heaven.⁹⁷ Thus, what non-Muslim targets of Islamist and al-Qaida aggression consider murderous, savage, and barbaric crimes of “terrorism,” the members of al-Qaida interpret as obligatory acts of sacred sacrifice.⁹⁸

Modern Oasis: Islamists' Visions of the Ideal State

Bin Laden did not formulate his interpretations in a vacuum. He is the heir of an intellectual legacy which has its roots in the ideas of Muslim thinkers dating to the eighteenth century and stretching over majority-Muslim countries from Egypt to Pakistan. Influential progenitors of the modern Islamic intellectual tradition include Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab (1703–87), Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–97), Muhammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905), Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935), Hasan al-Banna (1906–49), Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), Sayyid Abu'l-Aʿla Mawdudi (1903–79), and Ayman al-Zawahiri (b. 1951). While some of these figures predate the beginnings of contemporary Islamism, they defined several key themes and, in some cases, the organizational structures of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Islamism. They also articulated the grievances which Islamists level against the West: its historic colonialist, political, military, and cultural assaults against Muslims.⁹⁹ Concomitantly, Islamist groups (such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas) while making small variations to their messages, depending on the specific contexts where they operate, espouse visions of an ideal Islamic state that are similar to each other.

The Islamists' most vocal objections are directed against: (1) secular governments (such as those in Egypt, Syria, and Pakistan) and/or (2) governments which perceive themselves as based on Islam but which the Islamists believe are not (such as Saudi Arabia). Islamists oppose these governments because they perceive Islam as a total and complete system which God desires to institute as the exclusive basis for every aspect of life including the political, economic, cultural, public, and private.¹⁰⁰

The Islamists' beliefs regarding their religion's all-encompassing nature are based on their interpretations of the Quran, Hadith, and Islam's early history. For Islamists, God's wisdom, power, beneficence, and sacred injunctions should not be relegated to only some aspects of human affairs. In this regard, they quote passages such as Quran 2:2, "This is the book, in it is guidance sure, without doubt to those who fear God," and Quran 2:85:

Then it is only a part of the book that you believe in, and do you reject the rest? But what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life? And on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty. For God is not unmindful of what you do.¹⁰¹

In addition to these Quranic proclamations, Islamists look upon Muhammad's life as a supreme model for every aspect of daily existence. For example, according to the Hadith, "Verily, there was a good example for you in the ways of the Prophet."¹⁰² According to the Islamists' understandings of

Muhammad's life, during the time he led the early Islamic community, he made no distinctions between the secular, religious, and political realms; hence, for these activists there should be no distinction between these realms today. In their view, the Quran, Hadith, and Sunna (the Prophet Muhammad's example) establish the foundations of Sharia which, according to God's decree, must be the basis for every law governing majority-Muslim countries.¹⁰³

During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Islamists have actively worked to change their societies, espousing the following principles:

- 1 Sharia must govern every aspect of life in Muslim countries.
- 2 Governments should consist of true Muslims who obey all the Pillars of Islam and have faith in God in a manner that embodies all of Islam's teachings.
- 3 These governments may be either democratic (according to some Islamists) or ruled by a single emir (according to others) who has the function of God's vice-regent on earth.
- 4 Islamically-based governments must give their financial and political support exclusively to Islamic schools and universities and ban all other forms of education.
- 5 These governments must require schools to teach the most important subjects in Islam including the Quran, Hadith, Sunna, Sharia, Arabic, and Islamic history, as well as courses in math, the sciences, and social sciences, from a perspective which reflects the conviction that God is the creator of the universe and the Quran has foretold everything which humans have learned and will discover.
- 6 Islam must form the moral basis for all aspects of society. For Islamists, an Islamically-based ethical system encompasses the following ideals:
 - a Men and women must dress modestly. Men's bodies must be covered with loose-fitting clothing which does not arouse sexual interest, while women, when in public and in the presence of men to whom they are not related, must cover their bodies and wear headscarves or cover their faces completely. Interpretations among Muslims in general and Islamists in particular differ regarding the specific articles of clothing women should wear and whether or not their faces should be covered. There are also differing understandings regarding the articles of men's clothing and ways of wearing them that may or may not conform to various interpretations of Sharia.
 - b Men and women must remain separate from each other so as not to excite one other sexually. These limited interactions between the genders should prevent them from engaging in premarital and extra-marital sex, which are strictly forbidden.

- c In accordance with Islamic law, alcohol, prostitution, and gambling must be prohibited.
- d Virtually all Western movies, television shows, music, magazines, books, and images must be banned since they carry anti-Islamic messages which condone sex outside of marriage, alcohol consumption, materialism, selfishness, narcissism, and greed.
- e Islamic governments must establish economic systems which are wholly independent and free of reliance on the West.
- f Islamic governments must create societies where wealth is distributed equitably among all groups and where the large gaps which exist among the rich and poor are reduced. Islamic governments must also enable the availability of health care and a wide array of social services, including orphanages and welfare, which are supposed to assist the entire populace.¹⁰⁴

These ideals comprise one vision of an ideal Islamic state and of an eventual global Islamic state for many Islamists, including al-Qaida, and catalyze their religio-political movements.

Fundamentalisms and Interpretations of History

Typically, fundamentalists, such as the Islamists, attempt to formulate their ideals and then apply them to themselves and to others within their religion and society at large. As fundamentalists interpret texts, they do so with a desire to avoid compromise or thoroughgoing critical scrutiny of those texts and the other foundations of their ideas. In a number of cases, one salient component of religious fundamentalism involves fundamentalists taking active political roles in their efforts to shape society in accordance with their visions. Fundamentalism usually entails a number of features, including great religious passion, a defiance against secular and/or colonialist cultures, and a return to traditional sources of religious authority. Forms of fundamentalism are present in a number of religions, including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism to name a few.¹⁰⁵

By way of caveat, these and other ideas are meant to create an impressionistic picture of some similarities within and between what could be termed fundamentalists within various religions; the characteristics articulated here are to function as ideal types and may vary to the extent they characterize fundamentalists within or between various religions. The intention is to provide a general outline of what may be termed fundamentalism, while recognizing the enormous diversity in such movements within a given religion and between religions.

In any case, fundamentalists typically interpret their sacred histories in ways that mobilize their movements. For fundamentalists (and other religious people), the past is both exemplary and monitory; it is there to teach what must and must not be done.¹⁰⁶ The Islamist groups, which this book examines, share at least some of those characteristics with Christian and Jewish fundamentalists, for example. The Islamists are responding to a variety of what they perceive to be political, religious, social, and economic problems for which they believe their understanding of Islam holds the solution. Like other Muslims, Islamists interpret Islamic sacred texts and history in such a way that mobilizes their actions in modern and contemporary times. For all Muslims, including Islamists, some of the most important entities that form the basis of their contemporary worldviews are the Quran, Hadith, the Sunna, and, in some cases, early Islamic history.¹⁰⁷ Muslims use these and other elements to construct their meanings of the past, present, and future and to guide their actions.

In describing the ways that religious and other types of communities appropriate and understand their histories, among both fundamentalists and non-fundamentalists, the sociologist Anthony Giddens utilizes the term “reflexivity” and states that it is the characteristic of “all human action.”¹⁰⁸ Reflexivity takes place when individuals and/or communities utilize their perceptions of their histories as a way of guiding their present and future actions.¹⁰⁹ For Giddens, tradition is a means of “handling time and space, which asserts any particular activity or experience with the community of past, present, and future, these in turn being structured by recurrent social practices.”¹¹⁰ In light of this, tradition is a set of entities which religious communities and cultures continually reconstruct within certain parameters. Religions are not completely static in that almost every new generation reinvents the religious and cultural inheritance from the generations that preceded it.¹¹¹

While members of virtually all religious communities engage in the process of reflexivity, there are multiple examples of Islamists reflexively drawing on the sacred texts and history of Islam as they construct meanings related to their historic contexts. For example, when Islamists state their visions for an ideal Islamic state, they are reflexively drawing on the Quran, Hadith, Sunna, and aspects of Islamic history as they reconstruct their vision of that imagined past and then apply it to the present, while believing all along that the visions that they proclaim closely or exactly match aspects of the Islamic past. When Islamists identify their current enemies with the past enemies of Muhammad and with other groups whom they believe were the enemies of true Islam, and justify their violent acts against their current enemies based on those reconstructions, the Islamists are reflexively reconstructing Islamic history as a way of justifying their current actions. These and other reflexive reconstructions of history are not necessarily conscious or willful; this process can naturally flow from being religious and attempting to relate one’s

religious beliefs and actions to the specific historic context within which one finds oneself. Indeed, all Muslims, including Islamists, feel a deep connection with their religion's history, while, at the same time, interpreting Islam's history and sacred texts in different ways. As a part of this process that seems endemic to Islam, the Islamists are also reflexively reconstructing their interpretations of Islam's sacred texts and history in such way that mobilizes their religio-political movements as they attempt to achieve their goals. Like all Muslims, the Islamists feel their connectedness to Islam's sacred texts and history, in ways that the Islamists believe are genuinely Islamic.

Intentions

Among other things, this book argues that the worldviews of the members of al-Qaida follow specific patterns which are rooted in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Islamist ideas and institutions as well as some intellectual currents that date to the early modern period. It explores the connections between Islamist ideologies and movements in Egypt, the West Bank and Gaza, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, on the one hand, and those of al-Qaida, on the other. It also analyzes the United States' Middle East policies from the beginning of the post-World War II period, and the ways in which Islamist groups have structured their ideologies and organizations to address Western political, cultural, and military influence in the region.

This study:

- introduces the main ideological points within modern Islamist groups and ideologies in Egypt, the West Bank and Gaza, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, while describing these movements' histories and organizational structures in their socio-historical contexts;
- examines how Islamist groups in those five countries and regions have created educational institutions, hospitals, orphanages, and other social service venues which: (a) reinforce the Islamists' popularity among some segments of society; (b) perpetuate these organizations' visions of Islam; and (c) address the inadequate responses of governments to the educational, health, and other needs of many people within their societies;
- explores the changes in the structures and ideologies of Islamist groups and their differing strategies toward the governments which they oppose; and
- compares and contrasts some Islamists' arguments in favor of Islamically-based *autocratic* regimes with those of other Islamists who advocate Islamically-based *democratic* regimes.

This book intends to examine some of the most significant Sunni Islamist groups and movements in the modern era, particularly in the time period

leading to the attacks on September 11, 2001. At the same time, there are certain Islamist groups which are excluded from consideration. This study intends to focus on some of the ones which have been and continue to be particularly influential. While there are a variety of Shiite Islamist groups that are important and influential, this book does not focus on such groups.

Within this framework, this book treats the historic contexts related to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia, on the other, somewhat differently than it treats Egypt, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, partly because of the unique circumstances related to those two regions (although the circumstances in each country and region in this study can be considered distinctive in their own way). One of several factors that makes Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza different from the other countries and regions in this study is that it is a region where most Muslims believe the removal of land from the possession of an indigenous Middle Eastern population was most severe and unjust. As part and parcel of that, Israel is the only majority-Jewish state in the Middle East and the world; in addition, within that context, Arabs and Jews live in dramatically close proximity to each other, and the conflicts between Arabs and Jews are particularly magnified. These and other factors related to Israelis, Palestinians, and their relationships necessitate providing additional historic context about the formation of Israel and various Palestinian groups, including the Islamist group Hamas, in a way that is different from the other chapters.

While Islam plays a role in one way or another in all the countries and regions in this study, certain forms of Wahhabi Islam played a distinctively crucial role in the formation, establishment, and perpetuation of the modern Saudi state. At the same time, the Saudi government possesses a responsibility that no other nation in the world does; it must protect Mecca and Medina, the two holiest cities in Islam, while ensuring safe passage for Muslims to and from these sacred cities. The almost all-encompassing role of Wahhabi Islam in Saudi Arabia's history, development, and current status, its role as protector of Islam's holiest sites, and the role that those and other factors played in shaping Usama Bin Laden's worldview are some of the reasons that the chapter on Saudi Arabia provides additional historic context related to Wahhabi movements and their role in the formation of Saudi Arabia and al-Qaida.

Egypt, the West Bank and Gaza, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan

These countries and regions are the book's focus because Islamists from these areas have had a substantial impact on the formation of Islamism in general and al-Qaida in particular. Specifically, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Muhammad Atef (1944?–2001), two of al-Qaida's most powerful leaders,

were born in Egypt and in 1998 (the year that their Islamic Jihad organization joined forces with Bin Laden's al-Qaida) these intellectuals began to have an increasing impact on the policies and strategies of al-Qaida, while Islamist ideas from Egypt had a significant influence on al-Qaida and the Taliban before that time as well.¹¹²

Palestinians, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and issues related to the prospects of a Palestinian state also figure prominently within Islamism. For the vast majority of Muslims, the oppression and injustice to which they believe Israel (with American and European support) has subjected the Palestinians constitute some of the most cataclysmic events in the majority-Muslim world during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The calamities which Muslims believe have repeatedly struck the Palestinians have been reported on television, radio, in newspapers, and magazines almost daily since the 1940s. One of the few ideals which some governments in the majority-Muslim world share with the Islamist groups that oppose them is the hope for the establishment of a Palestinian state and an end to what most Muslims perceive to be Israeli oppression of Palestinians. Indeed, one of the most urgent demands that various Islamist groups, including al-Qaida and the Taliban, have been making is for the creation of a fully autonomous Palestinian state. Islamist groups, such as Hamas, play a significant role in Palestinian politics. Hamas is, in some respects, emblematic of Islamism more generally, and a pro-Palestinian position in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict forms a central problematic within the ideologies of Islamic groups throughout the world.¹¹³

Saudi Arabia and Iran, which are majority Sunni and Shi'ite respectively, have based their laws, their governments, and, to the extent that political structures can influence such matters, their societal mores on Sharia. The role of Islam in Saudi Arabia and its support of Islamist groups – particularly its on-again/off-again and at-times-direct/at-times-indirect support of al-Qaida – make an analysis of that country and its relationship to Islamism a key component of this study. A scholarly treatment of the religious, political, cultural, and economic ethos of Saudi Arabia is also helpful insofar as Usama bin Laden, 15 of the 19 September 11 hijackers, and large numbers of al-Qaida members inside and outside of Afghanistan are or were from Saudi Arabia.¹¹⁴ Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, born in 'Uyaynah, a town in modern-day Saudi Arabia, wrote numerous publications that helped set the foundations for Islamism and the modern Saudi state.¹¹⁵ Also, three of the Muslim scholars with whom Bin Laden trained and whose advice he subsequently sought are Saudis.¹¹⁶

Pakistani Islamism and, to a limited extent, the Pakistani government itself have contributed to the rise and strength of Islamism in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other parts of the majority-Muslim world.¹¹⁷ Historically, India and Pakistan have had a long-standing interest in maintaining influence

in Afghanistan as they have attempted to limit the political, economic, and related activities of the Iranians, Soviets, Chinese, Central Asians, and others within the Afghan region.¹¹⁸ More recently, from the 1990s until a few weeks after September 11, the Pakistani government, through its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) network, supported al-Qaida and the Taliban.¹¹⁹ The role of Pakistan in Islamism and modern Islamic intellectual life is significant in terms of its connections to the ideologies, actions, and organizational structures of the Taliban and al-Qaida.

Since Afghanistan was Bin Laden's adopted home for close to 20 years, it was a key base of operations for members of al-Qaida such as Bin Laden, Zawahiri, Atef, top-level al-Qaida advisers, significant numbers of rank-and-file al-Qaida militants, as well as sympathetic Taliban members, which constitute another focus of this study. From there, they formed their policies for al-Qaida, while attempting to strengthen that group's ties to the Taliban and other Islamist organizations.¹²⁰ Because al-Qaida's headquarters and educational and training centers were in Afghanistan, it was the first target of American attacks and military occupation after September 11. While Afghan intellectuals did not provide the necessary intellectual underpinnings for al-Qaida's formation, the country provided the physical location where members of al-Qaida exchanged ideas, crystallized their worldviews, planned strategy, created group cohesion, and trained themselves for future operations. Most of al-Qaida's founding principles emerged in a nation 2,200 miles away, Egypt.

Indeed, the next chapter of this book (Chapter 2) focuses on the history of Islamism in Egypt. It analyzes the ideas of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–97), Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905), and Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935), who resided in Egypt for various periods of time. The chapter then discusses the life and ideas of Hasan al-Banna (1906–49), who drew upon the ideas of Afghani, 'Abduh, and Rida, founded Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, and was one of Islamism's most influential activists. The chapter also explores the lives and ideas of other significant Islamists, such as Sayyid Qutb (a profound figure in the Muslim Brotherhood's history) and Ayman al-Zawahiri, who has played a crucial role in al-Qaida.

Chapter 3 examines the Palestinian resistance against Israel among Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, and Israel proper, and the ways in which various groups such as al-Fatah, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and Hamas have mobilized themselves in their efforts to create a Palestinian state. The chapter will analyze key figures in the Palestinian resistance, the structures of Palestinian resistance groups, and the various ways in which those groups have adapted and/or rejected Islamic and secular ideas in their ideologies. In addition, the chapter provides historic background regarding the establishment, formation, and development of the modern state of Israel.

Chapter 4 examines the role of the Wahhabi movement and Islam in the formation of the modern Saudi state and the ways in which various leaders in the Arabian peninsula appropriated Islam in the periods before, during and after the founding of the modern state of Saudi Arabia. The chapter analyzes the life and ideas of the influential Muslim intellectual Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–92) and the ways in which various political and religious leaders in the Arabian peninsula adapted his ideas as they formulated their conceptions of – or opposition to – the modern Saudi state. While the chapter examines the role of Wahhabism in Saudi statecraft, it also analyzes the role of Wahhabi ideas in the formation of Usama bin Laden's ideology and his and al-Qaida's resistance to the Saudi government.

Chapter 5 explores various aspects of some Islamist groups in Pakistan. In some ways like Egypt, the Indo-Pakistani region has been a major center of Islamic intellectual life and religious reform. A number of Sunni Islam's most prolific modern intellectuals, such as Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Iqbal, Sayyid Abu'l A'la Mawdudi, and Fazlur Rahman, have lived and worked in India and/or Pakistan.¹²¹ One of the largest Islamist organizations in the Sunni Muslim world, the Jama'at-i Islami was founded in Pakistan and continues to support and operate mosques, Islamic schools, hospitals, and other social service agencies there and outside the country.¹²² Pakistani-based Islamic organizations such as the Jama'at also provided educational, religious, political, and military support to the anti-Soviet Afghan mujahideen during the 1980s, to al-Qaida as it began to form in the mid-1980s and continued its work thereafter, and to the Taliban which began to take power in Afghanistan in 1994.¹²³ The chapter on Pakistan explores the intellectual and organizational development of Islamism and reform in the Indo-Pakistani region during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, giving specific attention to Muslim perspectives within this context which gave rise to the mobilization and the long-term popularity of such groups as Jama'at-i Islami, al-Qaida, and the Taliban among segments of the Pakistani population.

Over time, the regimes ruling India and Pakistan have had an interest in influencing political, cultural, and religious affairs in Afghanistan for a number of reasons. One significant impetus behind these nations' historic involvement in Afghanistan's internal politics has been India's and Pakistan's desire for security. Indian and Pakistani governments have long tried to use the Afghan region as a buffer against Iranian, Russo-Soviet, Central Asian, British, and even Chinese influence in the area. The involvement of the Pakistani government and Pakistani Islamist groups in Afghanistan's internal affairs during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has been an extension of Pakistan's long-standing concern with that country's future.¹²⁴ The chapter on Pakistan will also analyze the complex accommodationalist/oppositionalist strategies that Pakistan's government has taken toward Islamist groups operating within its borders and in Afghanistan and India.

Chapter 6 will examine the role of Islamist groups in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's protracted war against the Soviet invasion and occupation from 1979 to 1989 and the subsequent Afghan civil war in the 1990s not only decimated the country, it made Afghanistan a crucial center for the formation and growth of al-Qaida and the Taliban.¹²⁵ This chapter will examine the role which American military, financial, and political support of the mujahideen and of Usama bin Laden played in the origins and development of Islamism in Afghanistan during the 1980s and 1990s. It analyzes various Afghan and Muslim responses to the substantial decrease in American economic aid to Afghanistan after the Soviet pull-out from that country in 1989.¹²⁶ There was, for instance, an expectation among many Afghans that after the war against the Soviets, the United States would support an extended redevelopment program. Millions of Afghans felt betrayed when the United States showed little commitment to rebuilding the country after it had played a key role in helping the Afghans oust the Soviets in the 1980s.¹²⁷

The chapter on Afghanistan will also discuss the monetary and religious contributions which Usama bin Laden made – and which many Afghans believed he had made – to a poverty-stricken Afghanistan in the aftermath of American disengagement, and how Bin Laden's involvement and perceived involvement in Afghanistan's internal affairs lent strength to his stature among Muslims inside and outside of the country.¹²⁸ The chapter will also examine the relationship between al-Qaida and the Taliban, as well as the successful recruitment of large numbers of Muslims to their training camps, while providing an explanation of the goals which the multi-ethnic and transnational al-Qaida attempted to achieve by directing its message to large numbers of Muslims throughout the world with the hope of eventually establishing a global Islamic state. Central to this analysis is an examination of Islamism's growth in Afghanistan through an exploration of the Taliban's history, organization, and ideology. The chapter also examines the role of madrasahs in the Taliban's rise and development. Chapter 7, the book's conclusion, will summarize some of the book's findings and suggest some ideas regarding the future of Islamist movements.

The chapters in a book such as this one could be ordered in a variety of ways. The chapters in this volume move geographically in an approximate manner from west to east, Egypt being the westernmost country, which receives extensive treatment, Pakistan and Afghanistan lying further to the east, with Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, and Saudi Arabia lying roughly in between. While this study could have begun in any of the countries that are analyzed, Egypt is a viable place to begin because of the vitality of Islamic thought which has been present in that country for substantial periods of its history and because of the influence that Islamic ideas which have emanated from Egypt have had on the majority-Muslim world.

Notes

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Egypt

As with virtually any historical movement, one can begin the history of Islamism at any of several points. In Egypt, one possible starting point for examining this movement's history can be the ideas of three significant intellectuals, all of whom were born in the nineteenth century and spent significant portions of their lives in Egypt – Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–97), Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905), and Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935). These intellectuals formulated their Islamically-based ideas in the midst of enormous change and turmoil in Islam, in Egypt, and in the rest of the majority-Muslim world.

One of the most significant historical forces in Egypt and in much of the majority-Muslim world during modern history was Western colonialism. Some powerful Western countries with substantial colonial interests in the Muslim world were Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Italy. The Western country that had the greatest influence on Egypt during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was Great Britain. Those countries' colonialist influence was felt in the majority-Muslim world in ways that were military, cultural, economic, religious, linguistic, and educational. The nineteenth century was a time in Islamic history when some Muslim intellectuals inside and outside of Egypt critiqued colonialism and attempted to assert authentic Islamic identities in the face of colonialism's onslaught. Afghani, 'Abduh, and Rida were three such Muslim intellectuals.

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani was probably born in the Shiite-majority country of Iran, but he claimed his familial lineage was rooted in Afghanistan, which is

majority-Sunni, so that his ideas and actions would have greater impact in the Sunni world.¹ After finishing high school, he went to the cities of Najaf and Kerbala (both of which are in modern-day Iraq) to study Islamic law, an unusual course of action for a Sunni since both of these cities were and are centers of Shiite education. Afghani traveled to India in 1857 and participated in anti-colonialist activities there.

In 1891 Afghani had a leadership role in a grassroots movement of political dissenters against a specific policy of the Iranian Qajar king Nasir al-Din Shah. In 1890, this king had granted an English company the exclusive rights to produce, sell, and export Iran's entire tobacco crop. As a result of this enormous concession, many Iranians, who were already discontent with many of the king's policies and were suspicious of British colonial involvement in Iran, united in a series of large-scale protests against him. Afghani and much of Iran's ulema (Muslim religio-legal scholars) organized demonstrations and a large-scale tobacco boycott – collectively known as the Tobacco Protest – against the use of tobacco by Iranians.² Afghani and the ulema urged the population to join them in preserving the dignity of Islam in the face of growing foreign influences in the country.³ Afghani and the ulema portrayed the king's concession as a transgression of Sharia (Islamic law) and they used their power base – which was in many respects independent of the king's authority – to mobilize political and religious action against the king. In 1891, a mujtahid, or member of one rank within the Shiite ulema, issued a decree proclaiming the use of tobacco – which is ordinarily permitted in Islam – a violation of Sharia until such time as the concession was canceled (since, according to his reasoning, its use under the system of concessions was tantamount to allying oneself with the infidel British). In the wake of the Tobacco Protest, the king rescinded the concession. This was among the first Islamically-based political demonstrations in Iran's history and reflected Afghani's interest in integrating religious and political dimensions in his ideas and actions.

Afghani devoted much of his life to attempting to defend majority-Muslim countries, many of whose inhabitants believed they were threatened by European colonial expansion.⁴ Afghani's main objective was not necessarily to contribute to the political strength of individual majority-Muslim regions by nurturing nationalism, but to persuade Muslims to understand Islam in a way that Afghani believed was correct. Afghani maintained that Western countries had gained substantial advantages over nations in the majority-Muslim world because Muslims had ignored the teachings of the Quran and Hadith and had, as a result, become disunited and ignorant, and had begun to exhibit less individual and societal virtue.⁵ Afghani believed that if Muslims focused on, developed, and implemented the most important religious aspects of Islam, they would produce a thorough-going, authentic Islamic civilization that would successfully oppose the West's corrosive influences.

While Afghani opposed aspects of the West's cultural influence, he adapted some Western ideas in his own Islamic ideology. For example, in elucidating his beliefs about Islamic civilization, Afghani was influenced by the ideas of the French philosopher and sociologist François Guizot (1787–1874). Guizot believed that civilization was the most important historical accomplishment and was the highest benchmark by which all other achievements should be judged. For Guizot, civilization in its highest form contained people who hoped for progress and wanted to move forward actively. Guizot suggested two types of development: (a) social development which involves an increase in a society's power and the collective well-being of the individuals within it and (b) individual development which is the progress and evolution of a person's own faculties, sentiments, and ideas.⁶

For Afghani, with at least one important change, Guizot's vision would constitute a fitting description for his ideal of Islamic society. Afghani believed that during Islamic societies' great days – from the time of the initial establishment of a Muslim community in Medina under the Prophet Muhammad in 622 until the onset of colonialism in the early seventeenth century – Muslim societies manifested the characteristics of a thriving civilization: social and individual development, belief in reason, unity, and solidarity, which were qualities that began to decay in Muslim communities as a result of colonialism.⁷ Afghani believed that the office of the caliph (i.e., the caliphate) could be beneficial to Islamic societies since it had the potential to be a rallying point for Muslims and could function as the physical symbol which could provide unity for them. Caliphs were Islamic religio-political leaders who ruled or attempted to rule in a real or nominal manner during various periods of Islamic history. Afghani viewed the caliphate of his time as being seriously weakened.

Afghani maintained that one possible solution to the caliphate's problems would involve re-crafting the caliphate to reflect in some manner the ideas of the philosopher-king which the Muslim intellectual al-Farabi (878–950) had elucidated in his writings. Afghani believed that one of many problems with the caliphate was that it had become a largely ceremonial office with little influence on the daily religious lives of individual Muslims and on Muslim societies as a whole. For Afghani, the caliphate was in dire need of a thorough-going revitalization that involved each caliph gaining the deepest grasp of the full scope of Islamic teaching. Related to this, Afghani believed that a learned consultant to the caliph – the philosopher – could expand the caliph's knowledge of Islam while utilizing his interpretation of Islam as a way of helping inform the caliph's political decisions.

Afghani asserted the importance of the philosopher-king structure because he believed that Islam was an utterly comprehensive system that should form the foundation of every aspect of individual and societal life – including the religious, political, educational, economic, social, legal, and ethical.

Afghani maintained this conviction because he believed that God (who revealed his message to Muhammad and whom all Muslims were obligated to worship) provided Muhammad with a complete set of ultimately truthful and practical principles which Muslims had to fully implement. Since, according to Afghani, during the course of Islamic history, particularly during colonial times, the caliphs had become less and less knowledgeable about Islamic teachings, they came to occupy a decreasingly powerful position, which, in turn, made them less influential in terms of instituting those true Islamic teachings.

In line with these ideas, Afghani believed that one of many corrosive Western influences upon Islam was the idea of nationalism.⁸ One of the negative manifestations of nationalism for Afghani was that it encouraged Muslims to devote their allegiances to the nations where they lived instead of directing their ultimate loyalty to God through the religion of Islam. Afghani believed that nationalism carried the danger of transforming the state and its leaders into gods. While he knew that it was impossible on a practical level to completely uproot nationalism, he wanted to mitigate its negative impact on Islam as much as possible. While Afghani was aware of what he perceived to be nationalism's disadvantages, he admired the *unity* which nationalism seemed to foster in many European countries. He deeply believed that Islam, when properly understood and implemented, could have a similar unifying impact on societies and individuals in majority-Muslim countries. This unity, in turn, could invigorate Muslims and encourage them to Islamize their societies, while they rejected negative Western colonialist influences. This process of Islamization included using crucial aspects of Islam, such as the Quran, Hadith, and the example of the Prophet Muhammad, as ways of influencing the foundational dimensions of majority-Muslim societies.

Concomitantly, Afghani viewed the role of religion in public life in significantly different ways from most secular European intellectuals of his time. While those thinkers believed that Christianity, the majority religion of their countries, constituted an impediment to intellectual, economic, social, and national development, Afghani believed that Islam – because it was the supreme religion and the source of ultimate truth for every area of life – could stimulate every kind of progress. Afghani maintained that the sacred ideas which prophets receive through divine inspiration overlapped in limited ways with the ideas that philosophers could attain through reason.⁹ While there are some similarities between these two kinds of ideas, prophetic revelation carries ideas about God and law that, while consistent with reason, cannot be independently produced by reason. At the same time, for Afghani, one of the crucial differences between the truths that philosophers produce through reason and those that prophets receive through divine revelation is that the forms of reason and language that philosophers utilize

are understandable to very few. In contrast, the words of divine revelation are – by their very nature – comprehensible to everyone.

Building on these foundational ideas, Afghani stated that three of the most important truths which the Quran teaches are: (1) human beings are to be rulers of the earth under God's domain and that humans are the noblest of all created beings; (2) the religious community and society which human beings create and perpetuate *in accordance with God's decree* would by definition be the best possible type of community; and (3) humans have been sent into the world to perfect their societies and themselves in order to improve the moral and religious environments of the places where they live and to prepare themselves for eternal life in heaven.¹⁰ When people accept these truths and implement them in their lives and in society, three virtues, which form the basis of a vigorous and potentially righteous Islamic society, are manifested: modesty, trust, and truthfulness. With these virtues in mind, Afghani maintained that Muslims must be actively involved in the transformation of their societies.

For Afghani, one of the most pressing and urgent crises that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Muslims faced was that they were not active participants in transforming their societies to embody Islam's highest principles. Afghani believed that Muslims of his day either passively accepted the truncated Islam that Islamic religious and political leaders propagated and/or they accepted to varying degrees the deleterious ideas and practices of the secular West. Afghani's advocacy of Islamically-based religious and political activism provided a starkly contrasting vision of Islam compared to that with which the vast majority of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Muslims had been familiar. The Islam to which these Muslims had been exposed was one that primarily shaped individual and family life, but did not involve the kind of political activism which would transform the whole of society in majority-Muslim countries into the kind that was completely adherent to Islamic law. Afghani's totalistic vision of Islam was one of several that emerged during the modern era that came to influence future Islamist intellectuals and groups in the majority-Muslim world.

Muhammad 'Abduh

Another significant Muslim intellectual and visionary, who was based in Egypt and came to have a substantial impact on subsequent Islamic thought, was Muhammad 'Abduh, who was one of Afghani's students. Unlike Afghani, who never became a member of the ulema, 'Abduh did, making him a part of Egypt's religious establishment. Both during and after the time 'Abduh spent studying with Afghani, he was a student at one of the Sunni Islamic world's most renowned and influential institutions, Cairo's al-Azhar

University, which was founded in 970 and emphasized education in the Quran, Hadith, Islamic law and history, theology, and Arabic language, and (under Afghani's influence) reinstated the study of philosophy. 'Abduh taught at both al-Azhar and Dar al-Ulum in Cairo.

Much like Afghani, 'Abduh's discourse began with the problems of deterioration particular to Islamic societies and what he perceived as the need for inner revival, both within individual Muslims and within Egyptian society. In light of the problems that Egypt and other majority-Muslim countries faced, 'Abduh wrote that God had given Muhammad revelations that would provide individuals with eternal life in heaven and that would be instrumental in establishing virtuous societies. In general, 'Abduh believed that there were certain ways of acting in society that were consistent with the messages of the Quran and Hadith, and others that were not. For 'Abduh, as socio-historical circumstances and contexts changed, governments and individuals sometimes found themselves faced with challenges that the Quran and Hadith did not *explicitly* address, and it was the responsibility of Muslim intellectuals to decide which aspects of Islam's texts could be rigorously interpreted so as to be made applicable to Muslim societies' contemporary problems.¹¹

Two of several matters in the modern world which 'Abduh addressed in terms of Islam were law and education. These topics are important because aspects of them are intimately related to people's daily lives. The idea that God provided Muhammad with ultimate legal precepts is one of Islam's central features. In addition, education has traditionally been important in Islam, insofar as Muslims believe that Muhammad taught early Muslims that knowing and practicing the principles in Islam's texts, beliefs, and rituals should be foundational to their lives. 'Abduh maintained that in order for laws to be revised properly, citizens needed to be educated so they could revise the laws appropriately as times and circumstances changed.¹²

According to 'Abduh, the Western colonialists in Egypt together with the country's leaders had attempted to reform the country by replicating European institutions and laws in Egypt's vastly different milieu. 'Abduh maintained that the specifics of such laws were designed for the concrete circumstances of Europe and did not conform to the needs of Egyptian society. Thus, Egyptian Muslims had to reform Egypt's laws in such a way that properly instituted Sharia within the contemporary circumstances.

However, for 'Abduh the laws could not be reformed until Egypt's educational systems were changed in such a way that the Muslim intellectuals who received their education in these schools could – with sophisticated understandings and nuanced methodologies – analyze, critique, and revise Egypt's laws. 'Abduh maintained that Muslims had to establish Islamic educational systems that would strike a delicate balance between teaching the basic texts and precepts of Islam, on the one hand, and instilling students

with the ability to think critically, on the other. The educational system that he envisioned would encourage free-flowing, sophisticated, nuanced, critical and analytical thinking, while educating students thoroughly in Islam. For 'Abduh, the graduates of such an educational system, that is, students who were steadfast Muslims and could think critically, were essential to Egyptian society and Islamic society as a whole. Their solid Islamic faith and practice would guide their decisions and enable them to serve as positive Muslim role models. At the same time, their ability to think critically and flexibility would position them to fashion laws in a way that would remain consistent with Islam's teachings, while addressing societies' contemporary needs. 'Abduh believed it was essential for Muslims to create educational institutions which would produce the kind of Muslims who could reform Egyptian and Islamic societies in such a way that Islam's "essence" was preserved in the laws and that, at the same time, society's vitality was maintained.

In his thinking, 'Abduh did not completely reject Western ideas and methods. Rather, he believed it was possible for Muslims to carefully adapt such principles in ways that would suit Islam's needs. For example, he responded positively to the advances which the West had made in science and medicine, yet he believed that Muslims needed to learn about and appropriate these advances in ways that would benefit Muslims – without reinforcing the materialistic and consumption-oriented social and economic structures which scientific and medical advances helped promote in the West.

In the humanities, for instance, advances which Westerners had made in philology and linguistics could increase Muslims' knowledge of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the Quran, and Hadith, in such a way that would strengthen their Islamic faith and practice and bring them to increasingly vivid understandings of the applicability of their religion to contemporary life. 'Abduh also wrote positively of the ways in which Western educational systems encouraged the refinement of critical thinking on the part of students and faculty.

Yet, while in principle 'Abduh believed in the importance of fostering critical thinking, he did not fully apply this ideal to the political sphere. 'Abduh, much like Afghani and other previous Muslim political philosophers, believed that Muslim societies could derive great benefit from a just tyrant who would govern fairly and institute the advances which 'Abduh envisioned. He went so far as to say that a just despot could do more for Muslims in 15 years than Muslims could do for themselves in 15 centuries. 'Abduh believed that there were limits to the advantages that fostering critical thinking could bring to society; while he maintained that it was important for Egyptian society to cultivate the kind of intellectuals who could criticize laws and other aspects of societies that needed reform, 'Abduh did not envision this kind of critique taking the form of organized political protest against governments. In other words, 'Abduh was not advocating

the democratization of Muslim governments, nor did he view democracy as essential for catalyzing the kind of critical thinking he had in mind. Related to this, 'Abduh did not fear that encouraging critical and analytical thinking in schools might lead to those very students and others engaging in calls for democratic reform. In this and other respects, 'Abduh was a product of his time. In a complex and nuanced fashion, he combined some of the ideas and habits which he learned from the West with some of those that he had inherited from Islam.

What for Westerners may seem like the unexpected combination of advocacy for a just despot and support of critical thinking is emblematic of the contrasting sources from which 'Abduh drew. He adapted his ideas regarding the importance of a just despot from Islamic sources and Islamic cultural norms which suggest (either explicitly or implicitly) that when societies are not led by a strong political leader, chaos ensues. 'Abduh clearly expressed this anxiety in his writings. Yet, Western sources influence 'Abduh's assertions about the benefits of critical thinking. He holds these pro-despotic and "pro-critical thinking" perspectives without believing they contradict each other.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, 'Abduh's ideas – sometimes in refashioned forms – were adapted by Islamists and Islamic liberals. The Islamists adapted the aspects of 'Abduh's ideas which they interpreted as suggesting the need for a highly specific (and rigid) implementation of Islamic codes in every aspect of society. Islamic liberals, for their part, interpreted 'Abduh as encouraging Muslims to think critically and to carefully integrate aspects of Western thought into their own worldviews.

Muhammad Rashid Rida

Another influential intellectual of this late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Egyptian school, who had a substantial influence on subsequent Islamic thought, was Muhammad Rashid Rida. Rida was heavily influenced by the thought of Afghani and 'Abduh – at times restating their ideas while, at other times, reshaping or even departing from them. Rida was as concerned as both Afghani and 'Abduh about the deteriorating state of Islamic societies. He was alarmed by the accelerating moral decline in such countries with respect to a number of areas including the increased use of "immodest" dress among women and men, looser sexual standards, increasing alcohol consumption, gambling, noticeable greed and materialism, and the availability of Western publications, which promoted these and other morally objectionable attitudes and ways of life. Rida was also deeply concerned about the political, economic, and cultural influence of colonialist powers – particularly Great Britain and France – in the majority-Muslim

world. He attempted to conceive of ways that Muslims could strengthen their religion in order to thoroughly assert Islam's vital truthfulness and to combat colonialist influence.

In this context, the primary question which concerned Rida, 'Abduh, and Afghani was, "Why have Islamic societies fallen substantially behind Western societies in terms of technological advancements, economically, and in other respects?"¹³ These intellectuals' answer to this question is based on the idea that there is an inherent and necessary relationship between obedience to Islam's principles, on the one hand, and prosperity and technological advancement, on the other. Rida, 'Abduh, and Afghani believed that since Islam contains supreme truth, obeying its principles can lead to every manner of fruitfulness and benefit for the individual and society, which would include worldly power, respectability, as well as the rapid, efficient, and vigorous advance of faithful and obedient Muslims. In contrast, if Muslims do not adhere to Islam's teachings the results would be weakness, lack of respect, poverty, and decline of both the individual and society. According to these three intellectuals, the reason for the deterioration of Islamic societies is that Muslims have lost sight of Islam's most important teachings.¹⁴

One of many reasons that Rida believed that Muslims had lost sight of Islam's important teachings was because of political rulers who, while claiming to be Muslim, either did not fully understand Islam or, if they did, chose to ignore it as they made political decisions. For Rida, two of Islam's most important teachings as they applied to his context were that God is one and that political leaders must make their decisions based on the religion's true and properly understood principles. Rulers claiming to be Muslims have induced the Muslim populace into forgetting the importance of basing political decisions on Islam by subtly encouraging Muslims to release themselves of their obedience to God. Yet, for Rida, the momentous events of the seventh century – God's creating the first Islamic community and inculcating them with Islam's truth – can, albeit on a lesser scale, be reinstituted if Muslims return to Islam's true teachings.¹⁵

According to Rida, technical skill can be learned by many different kinds of people – both Muslims and non-Muslims. Yet, one of the tasks of Muslims – in addition to being properly grounded in Islam – is to learn the habits of mind and gain the intellectual faculties which would enable Muslims to develop modern technical aptitudes, because in the hands of Muslims, the correct application of those skills could lead to more technologically advanced Islamic societies that could benefit large numbers of Muslims. Yet, like 'Abduh, Rida believed that Muslims were obligated to limit the negative effects of technologically advanced societies, such as consumerism, greed, and selfishness. Both of these intellectuals believed that faithful Muslims living in Islamic societies where Sharia was properly instituted could harness the best aspects of

technical aptitudes and technological advances, benefiting Islamic societies, while avoiding the degradations which typified the West.

For Afghani, 'Abduh, and Rida another natural outgrowth of political leaders' and a Muslim populace's commitment to true Islam should be unity. When these three intellectuals spoke of unity, they did not mean that it should be largely or purely emotional or that a single Islamic state should be formed. For them, Islamic unity entailed a general agreement – among those who considered themselves to be true Muslims and who coexisted with one another in a state of mutual tolerance – that they would actively work together in obeying and implementing the dictates of the true Islam.¹⁶ This community's unity, cohesion and veracity were based on and in turn reinforced by the saying of Muhammad in the Hadith, "My community shall not agree upon an error."¹⁷

Yet, Rida did not believe that interpreting the Quran and Hadith, in cases where these documents are silent, was an individualistic enterprise. Rather, the people who applied their reason and made decisions in such cases had to be just and devout Muslim rulers working in tandem with members of an ulema who truly understood Islam and who were qualified educationally and by virtue of personal attributes to render accurate opinions about various matters.¹⁸ For Rida, the making of laws in these and all other cases should take place as a result of consultation (*shura*) between the political leaders and members of this true ulema.¹⁹ In conceiving of the relationship between the political leadership and the ulema in this way, he envisions "the ulema as an organized body, of the shura as a deliberat[ive] process, and of the law which it produces as springing from some sort of formal procedure."²⁰ In constructing the decision-making system in this way, Rida is strongly suggesting that an Islamically-based legislative principle working in accordance with some kind of parliamentary process could create an environment for the writing of laws that are both true to Islam and effective for the needs of Islamic societies. Yet, Rida does not provide illustrative details about such potential procedures.

While Rida's political thought suggests some very rough outlines of what today may be called an Islamically-based democracy, he forcefully asserts what he believes to be the crucial importance of the perpetuation of a caliphate led by a caliph who fully understood, practiced, and was powerful enough to enforce true Islamic principles in majority-Muslim societies. (The Ottoman caliphate, which was based in Istanbul during much of Rida's life, was deposed by the charismatic secular Turkish leader Kemal Atatürk in 1924.) While Rida believed, in some respects, in the efficacy of Islamically-based consultation in the law-making process, he vehemently opposed secularism, because it contradicted Islam's basic principles. Both by virtue of his own Islamic convictions and in response to the increasingly powerful secularizing and Westernizing forces that surrounded him, Rida conceived

of the caliph as a person who should guide the writing of Islamically-based laws and assertively supervise their implementation. According to Rida, the caliph was to be the leading interpreter of Islam who, because of his high aptitude and educational background, could apply Islam's ideals to continually changing social and political contexts. This kind of caliph, who fully adhered to Islam's truest principles, would – by virtue of the esteem in which he was held – be able to persuasively encourage the leaders of governments to implement these laws. Rida maintained that only with such a caliph in a leadership position could a truly Islamic society exist. In addition, only such a caliph could bring into existence the institutions which would properly promote the academic disciplines (within the study of Islam as well as the technical and scientific fields) that would – together with other elements in society – lead to Islam's ultimate ascendance and the unity of all Muslims.²¹

The model for political leadership which Rida envisioned, while Islamically-based, involved a combination of semi-democratic and authoritarian principles. The aspects of his model that involved consultation between members of the ulema, consultation between members of the ulema and the caliph, and parliamentary processes for the passage of laws were semi-democratic in the sense that the ulema and elected leaders participated. Yet, the leadership and power which Rida believed should have been accorded to the caliph are suggestive of the authoritarian strand within Rida's thought. Like certain other political philosophers, either Western or Muslim, Rida wrote in general terms and did not consider the contradictions or potential unworkability of his proposals. Rather, in framing his conceptions of an ideal Islamic state, he tried to combine what he perceived to be the egalitarian and authoritarian strands within Islam's sacred texts and history in order to construct his vision of an Islamic state for his time. Subsequent twentieth- and twenty-first-century Muslim intellectuals and political organizations would reinterpret and implement versions of Rida's authoritarian and egalitarian-democratic strands as they conceived of and/or established Islamic political and religious entities.

Generally speaking, the works of Afghani, 'Abduh, and Rida are significant because they reflect the fact that these intellectuals were actively and vitally engaged in appropriating the sacred texts and histories of Islam to the radically changing circumstances which surrounded them. Specifically, they were among an early and influential group of modern Muslim intellectuals who attempted to show that Islam could speak in persuasive and relevant ways to the problems posed by the West's technical and scientific structures, Western colonialism, weakening political, economic, and social structures in the majority-Muslim world, and what these intellectuals perceived to be the moral decay in their own societies. This is no small accomplishment given the enormity of the problems such societies faced. These intellectuals critiqued and tried to propose Islamically-based solutions for their societies' problems.

Yet, they operated within a political, cultural, and educational environment which often stifled creative, critical, and analytic thinking – particularly when it pertained to Islam. In these ways, the intellectual contributions of these three intellectuals to modern Islam cannot be overestimated. Their ideas formed a monumental threshold to both Islamists and liberal Muslims in the sense that they encouraged these and other Muslims to use Islam’s foundational documents and principles – the Quran, Hadith, and life of Muhammad – as bases for critiquing the status quo and establishing Islam, in one way or another, as the vital underpinning for majority-Muslim societies.

Hasan al-Banna

Afghani, ‘Abduh, and Rida did not create any long-lasting organizations which embodied their ideas. Hasan al-Banna (1906–49), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, which became one of the largest and most influential Islamist organizations during the twentieth century, adapted some of their ideas and implemented them in the establishment and perpetuation of the Muslim Brotherhood; indeed, al-Banna even turned to Rida for guidance and knowledge.²² Some aspects of those three intellectuals’ thought that are present in al-Banna’s ideas are the rejection of significant aspects of Western secularism and colonialism, the idea that Muslims’ straying from “the true Islam” was one reason Muslim societies fell behind Western societies, and the belief that implementing “true Islamic teachings” in majority-Muslim countries would solve those countries’ problems and enable them to become the world’s most advanced nations. Al-Banna drew from numerous sources in formulating his ideas and the influences on his thinking were not limited to the ideas of Afghani, ‘Abduh, and Rida. Yet those three intellectuals’ beliefs formed a significant part of the milieu in which al-Banna lived and worked. Al-Banna’s interpretation of Islam reflected what later came to be called Islamism. During al-Banna’s lifetime, the Muslim Brotherhood had roughly half a million members and had chapters in several majority-Muslim countries; by the end of Hasan al-Banna’s life, it came to be one of the most influential Islamist organizations in modern times.

Al-Banna was born in the small town of Mahmudiyya, 90 miles north of Cairo.²³ His father, Sheikh Ahmad ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Banna al-Sa’ati, was the leader (or imam) of the local mosque and had been educated at al-Azhar at the same time as ‘Abduh.²⁴ At the age of 8, Hasan al-Banna began his education at a Quranic school (*kuttab*) and at age 12 he was enrolled in a primary school, where he became a member of the first of many Islamic societies during the formative years of his life.²⁵ At age 14, he enrolled in the primary teachers’ training school in a town outside of Mahmudiyya.²⁶ At the age of 16, he left the teachers’ training school and later in the same year

he began his studies at Dar al-Ulum in Cairo, the same university where 'Abduh had taught.²⁷ Over time, Dar al-Ulum became a university-level teacher-training school and, with the rise of Egypt's secular university system, it became increasingly traditional in its teaching methods, contents, as well as faculty and student body.²⁸

After reaching Cairo, al-Banna was appalled at the alcohol consumption, sexual promiscuity, gambling, and preponderance of Western clothing styles, Western movies, art forms, and magazines which were capturing the attention of many Cairenes. He was also horrified at the political conflicts and religious disunity in Egypt's capital as well as the rising influence of secularism in political and social life.²⁹ In response to this deterioration, al-Banna organized a group of students from al-Azhar University who would promote what al-Banna and they considered to be "the true faith and teaching of Islam" to Egyptian Muslims, and eventually, they hoped, to Muslims throughout the majority-Muslim world.³⁰ By 1927, al-Banna had fully committed himself to his purpose in life; he would work to resist the Western influences and the decay in his society by becoming a "counselor and teacher," devoting himself to educating children and their parents "in the objectives of religion [i.e., Islam] and the sources of their well-being and happiness in life."³¹ He dedicated himself to these objectives with "perseverance and sacrifice." With a knowledge of Islam's teachings, his body was prepared to endure suffering with a soul which he had "sold to God."³²

After accepting an appointment in 1927 as a primary school teacher in the Egyptian town of Ismailiyya, near the Suez Canal, al-Banna continued to preach Islam, educate people in small groups, and train cadres of Muslim leaders to spread this message.³³ Subsequently in 1928, al-Banna's own organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, came into existence.³⁴ In March 1928, six Muslim laborers who were working with the British camp labor force in the Suez Canal area made a statement to al-Banna, which to him signified the inauguration of the Muslim Brotherhood.³⁵ While the precise wording of this statement from these six men cannot be verified, what al-Banna believed they said is worth stating for at least two reasons. First, these declarations encapsulate the *spirit* of the initial impetus and vision for the movement, and second, they indicate one significant source of the organization's strength – namely, the powerful and dynamic relationship between al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood's members.³⁶ According to al-Banna, the men approached him and after thanking him for his leadership, guidance, and instruction said to him:

We have heard and we have become aware and we have been affected. We know not the practical way to reach the glory of Islam and to serve the welfare of Muslims. We are weary of this life of humiliation and restriction. We see that the Arabs and the Muslims have no status and no dignity. They are

not more than mere hirelings belonging to the foreigners. We possess nothing but this blood ... and these souls ... and these few coins We are unable to perceive the road to action as you perceive it, or to know the path to the service of the homeland, the religion, and the nation as you know it. All that we desire now is to present you with all that we possess, to be acquitted by God of the responsibility, and for you to be responsible before him for us and for what we must do. If a group contracts with God sincerely that it live for his religion and die in his service, seeking only his satisfaction, then its worthiness will assure its success however small its numbers or weak its means.³⁷

With these words, according to al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood was formed. The fact that other Muslims actively called – and in al-Banna’s mind commissioned – him into service is compelling because it indicates to him that his duty to lead the Muslim Brotherhood was not fully initiated by him, but by others who recognized his God-given gifts. While it is heresy in Islam to compare oneself to the Prophet Muhammad – and this like every other heresy is one that al-Banna would not commit – there are echoes in this story of a prophetic call to service. At the same time, numerous modern Muslim reformers have drawn upon metaphors and imagery from Muhammad’s life as ways of legitimating and sacralizing what they perceive to be their own calls to service.³⁸ According to Muslim biographers, after Muhammad received his first Quranic revelations from the angel Gabriel in 610 CE, his wife Khadija and her cousin Waraqa confirmed the notion that messages Muhammad was receiving were from God. Reverberating with similar archetypes, al-Banna did not generate his life’s purpose on his own; rather, al-Banna believed that God used other human beings as conduits through whom he commissioned al-Banna into the service of Islam.

Al-Banna attempted to implement this call and to spread his vision of Islam by means of a practical plan of action that involved creating branches of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt that would engage in the following tasks:

- 1 Establishing night schools which taught people of all ages how to read and provided intensive education about Islam. At the same time, the Brotherhood set up primary, secondary, and technical schools, which, in addition to other academic disciplines, provided instruction in Islam.
- 2 Creating charitable organizations, which were tied to the Muslim Brotherhood, which provided social welfare and health care among the needy.
- 3 Organizing physical training and athletic teams in order to promote health among the Muslim Brothers and others who were affiliated with their organization.
- 4 Constructing or setting aside rooms in existing mosques for meetings and other organizational functions related to strengthening Islamic faith and practice and spreading “the true Islam” in Egypt.³⁹

These practices, in addition to building Islamic faith and practice and perpetuating it, were, at the same time, intended to create socio-economic justice and equality in Egyptian society and, eventually, other majority-Muslim countries. Al-Banna believed that his ideas for justice and equality were firmly rooted in the Quran and the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. He believed that Muhammad led an austere life and envisioned an Islamically-based society that embodied economic and political equality; al-Banna endeavored to actualize that goal in Egyptian society, where there were enormous rifts between the rich and poor. Al-Banna criticized the socio-economic injustices in Egypt in one of the tracts which elucidated the Muslim Brotherhood's religious, political, and economic ideals for Egypt: "Remember, brothers, that more than sixty percent of Egyptians live in conditions worse than those in which animals live; [these Egyptians] can only obtain their food by breaking their backs. Egypt is threatened with deadly famine, exposed to economic problems which have no solutions except through God."⁴⁰

Al-Banna believed that there were a number of means, working in tandem, that could solve the socio-economic inequities in Egyptian society. One such instrument was the zakat, which is a required annual contribution for Muslims of at least 2.5 percent of all their assets and is one of Islam's Five Pillars. Al-Banna believed that if all Muslims actually contributed their zakat and if it were properly distributed among all Muslims, particularly to the economically disadvantaged, this could be one major step toward helping alleviate economic inequities in the majority-Muslim world.⁴¹ Thus, for Hasan al-Banna a truly Islamic society should be based in part on economic justice. While strong Islamic faith and obedience to Islamic law should be integral elements of such a society, at the same time, institutions embodying equity and fairness, state-sponsored organizations practicing economic justice, and progressive taxation on income and wealth should, in his view, also play a crucial role. It should be borne in mind that, in some respects, al-Banna's view of socio-economic justice and equality was quite different from that of many Westerners, in that for him a thoroughly *Islamic* society under *Islamic* laws was the most important goal. For example, two of several differences between al-Banna's conception of justice and equality, on the one hand, and those of many Westerners, on the other, are that men and women in his society would have very different roles and that law courts would operate under *Islamic* and not secular laws.

From 1928 until 1945, the Muslim Brotherhood under al-Banna's leadership had increased its missionary activity, generated numerous publications, organized a wide range of lectures, recruited ever-larger numbers of members, and strengthened its internal structure. During this period and throughout much of its history, the Muslim Brotherhood funded its work mostly through membership fees, contributions, estate gifts, and

profits from its business enterprises including publications.⁴² The Muslim Brotherhood had also built its own companies, factories, schools, and hospitals, whose revenues helped fund the organization.⁴³ The Muslim Brotherhood remained strong financially even through the very difficult economic period during and after World War II when Egypt faced: (1) sky-rocketing inflation; (2) an accelerating gap between the rich and poor; (3) a sharp growth in urbanization and people from rural areas moving to cities, particularly Cairo; (4) rapid growth of the industrial sector; and (5) high unemployment.⁴⁴ In the midst of these enormous challenges, by 1948 the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had an estimated 500,000 active members in 4,000 branches across the country.⁴⁵ Concomitantly, it has been argued that from approximately the late 1930s until 1945 various Islamist groups, including Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, were influenced by the strands of German National Socialist (Nazi) thought which had an anti-Semitic character and that aspects of this worldview may have continued to influence the Muslim Brotherhood and some other Islamist groups long after the end of World War II.⁴⁶

In any case, as the Muslim Brotherhood grew in strength and numbers, at least one faction arose within the Brotherhood that attempted to use physical force in attempts to achieve that faction's aim of toppling the Egyptian government and establishing what those members perceived to be a truly Islamic government. During a period of great political unrest in Egypt in the late 1940s, two members of the Muslim Brotherhood assassinated Ahmad al-Khazindar Bey, a respected Egyptian judge, on March 22, 1948, in all likelihood because he had given another Muslim Brother a lengthy prison sentence for his attack on British citizens in a club in Alexandria, Egypt.⁴⁷ In November 1948, the two assassins were sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor.⁴⁸ Al-Banna was questioned about his possible role in the assassination and released because of lack of evidence.

Soon afterwards, al-Banna expressed considerable opposition to the assassinations and deep concern that certain segments of the Brotherhood were not under his complete control.⁴⁹ Yet, al-Banna cannot be completely absolved of responsibility for the assassinations because he had expressed his own displeasure with the sentence which Khazindar handed down to the Muslim Brothers who were prosecuted for the attack on the club in Alexandria.⁵⁰ Attacks and attempted attacks by members of the Muslim Brotherhood against government institutions continued during the year and climaxed on December 28, 1948 with a Muslim Brother's assassination of Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi Pasha, after he had declared the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood and had aggressively pursued the arrest of its members.⁵¹

While Hasan al-Banna condemned the Egyptian government's dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood, its members' torture in prisons, loss of jobs and

property, and unwarranted search and censorship at the hands of the government, al-Banna explicitly condemned al-Nuqrashi's assassins and all Muslim Brothers who perpetrated violence. These declarations, which were "painfully and angrily received by his followers," stated that individuals who engaged in acts of violence were "neither Brothers nor were they Muslims."⁵² Al-Banna continued by exhorting the "young ones" in the Brotherhood to stop writing belligerent letters and engaging in violent acts, saying that he would consider any future violations of these principles or of Egyptian law by any Muslim Brother as directed against himself and that he would personally accept all legal ramifications of such actions.⁵³

During the brief tenure of al-Nuqrashi's successor Prime Minister Ibrahim Abd al-Hadi Pasha, who was in office from December 28, 1948 until July 26, 1949, members of Egypt's political police assassinated Hasan al-Banna on February 12, 1949 in retaliation for the Brotherhood's violent activities and the assassination of al-Nuqrashi.⁵⁴ In 1954, two years after Egypt's Free Officers gained power through a coup d'état, four persons who were responsible for al-Banna's assassination were brought to trial and given prison sentences. The investigations and the trial proceedings indicated that al-Banna's assassination was an act planned by the Egyptian Prime Minister's office and other high-level officials in the Egyptian government.⁵⁵

Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood after Hasan al-Banna

After al-Banna's death, a succession of supreme leaders followed him. These leaders included Hasan al-Hudaybi (1949–72), Umar al-Tilimsani (1972–86), Hamid Abu al-Nasr (1986–96), Mustafa Mashour (1996–2003), Ma'mun Hudaybi (2003–4), and Mahdi Akef (2004–10).⁵⁶ During the late 1940s and 1950s, the Muslim Brotherhood had a tenuous and at times tumultuous relationship with the Egyptian government because of the Brotherhood's anti-secular and pro-Islamic stance combined with a series of violent acts which members of the Brotherhood perpetrated against government interests. One of the most significant events in twentieth-century Egyptian politics was the coup d'état of the strongly secularist and nationalist Egyptian Free Officers in 1952.⁵⁷ These secularist Free Officers deposed Egypt's Prime Minister and King, taking charge of the Egyptian government, declaring a political plan which called for the end of British colonialism in Egypt, the ousting of Egyptian colonialist sympathizers, the termination of the political influence of the Egyptian state by Western capital, the institution of social and economic justice, the formation of a strong national army, and the creation of a vibrant democratic life.⁵⁸ General Muhammad Naguib, one of the Free Officers and a popular military and political leader, became the first Prime Minister and President after the Free Officers' coup.⁵⁹ In 1954,

another charismatic member of the Free Officers' corps, Gamal Abd al-Nasser, who had served as Interior Minister under Naguib, ousted Naguib, accusing him of sympathizing with the Muslim Brotherhood, and placed him under house arrest which lasted until Naguib's death in 1984.⁶⁰ Nasser remained President and Prime Minister until his death in 1970, when his Vice-President, Anwar Sadat, became his successor as President of Egypt.⁶¹

In 1954, a segment of the Muslim Brotherhood planned an assassination attempt on President Nasser which took place in October of that year. This failed assassination attempt may have been an initial step on the part of the Brotherhood to implement a broader strategy to overthrow Nasser's secular government and replace it with an Islamic one, based on the Brotherhood's principles.⁶² While the Nasser government had taken substantial steps to subdue the Muslim Brotherhood before this assassination attempt, the government intensified its efforts to destroy the Muslim Brotherhood immediately in the wake of this violent act. In the months following the shots fired at Nasser, the Egyptian government engaged in a media barrage which vilified the Muslim Brotherhood, saw to the destruction of the Brotherhood's headquarters, imprisoned thousands of the organization's members, brought numerous Brothers to trial, and condemned 15 Brotherhood members to death, executing six of them.

Sayyid Qutb

The government's brutal and oppressive campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood continued during much of the 1950s and 1960s and it was within this repressive environment that one of the most influential intellectuals in the Muslim Brotherhood's history, Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), formulated his ideas. Qutb's interpretations of Islamic history, Islam's sacred texts, and his conception of Islam's role in the twentieth century would have a tremendous influence on a number of Islamist leaders and organizations, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, Usama bin Laden, and al-Qaida. Qutb is a towering figure in modern Islamic intellectual history.

Sayyid Qutb was born in 1906 in the town of Musha near the city of Asyut in Upper Egypt. Qutb's father was highly educated with strong leanings toward Egyptian nationalism. Qutb attended the school in Musha which most of the other children attended. This kind of school is known as a *kuttab* and students in such schools typically memorize large portions of the Quran and learn about other Islamic texts.⁶³ By the age of 10, Qutb had memorized the entire Quran. His mother strongly encouraged him in this process and in his entire Islamic education because she wanted her son to become a scholar of Islam. This hope was realized – in what may have been an unexpected way – later in Sayyid Qutb's life.⁶⁴ Qutb graduated from the

Dar al-'Ulum with a Bachelor of Arts degree in literature and a diploma (or certificate) in education in 1933.⁶⁵

After graduating, Qutb received a teaching position with Egypt's Department of Education, which he served from 1933 until 1939. In addition to teaching, Qutb devoted much of his time to writing during the 1930s and 1940s. His publications were primarily non-religious; he wrote two autobiographies, poems, essays, literary criticism, and love stories, which at times related to political issues.⁶⁶ The influence of numerous Western literary figures, such as the British novelist and poet Thomas Hardy (1840–1928), is clearly evident in much of Qutb's early writing. Qutb's early works also manifest features of Western conceptions of liberalism, individualism, and modernism.⁶⁷

Before his trip to the United States, Qutb articulated his opposition to Western colonialism in largely secular ways.⁶⁸ That is, while before Qutb's trip to America he vehemently opposed what he perceived to be the Western colonialist assault on Egypt, he did not use Islam as a basis for opposing it. Rather, during this period, his opposition to colonialism was based on such principles as nationalism, freedom, liberty, equality, and individual rights, which were derived from Western thought.⁶⁹ In this and other ways, Sayyid Qutb's thinking was close to that of other secular Egyptian intellectuals such as Taha Husayn (1889–1973) and 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad (1889–1964). Over time, Qutb's and al-'Aqqad's ideas came to overlap in increasingly substantial ways; both “joined the secularist Wafd party, turned against it after the death of the Egyptian nationalist Sa'd Zaghlul (1857–1927), did not marry, and turned against Western ideas and institutions” and toward Islamism.⁷⁰ However, after 25 years, Qutb ended his friendship with al-'Aqqad, because he refused to write the introduction to one of Qutb's books.⁷¹

The most dramatic and life-changing turning point in Sayyid Qutb's life was his trip to the United States which began in 1948.⁷² In that year, Egypt's Ministry of Education sent Qutb to the United States so that he could gain a thorough understanding of educational philosophies and practices in the United States. The Ministry's intent was for Qutb to return to Egypt so that he could convey the knowledge he had acquired to the Ministry and others in Egypt in order to help improve Egypt's educational system.⁷³ As a result of his time in America, Qutb embraced Islam as the ultimate solution to the tremendous challenges which the individuals, societies, and political structures of the majority-Muslim world faced. He came to utterly reject Western ideas and secularism as vehicles for solving Egypt's and the majority-Muslim world's problems.

One of Qutb's first experiences with the West which he found objectionable occurred aboard the ship that transported him to the United States. Returning to his cabin one night after evening prayers, he ran across what

he called a “drunken half-naked woman” who made Qutb a carnal offer, which as a Muslim shocked and was abhorrent to him. It was unimaginable to Qutb that a Muslim woman in his own country would behave in this way and make what he considered to be such a lewd overture.⁷⁴ His other experiences in the United States reinforced his moral outrage with the West and confirmed in his mind the truth of Islam and its potential effectiveness in solving individual and societal problems.

The three features of American culture to which Qutb most objected were what he considered its materialism, bigotry, and loose sexual standards.⁷⁵ According to Qutb, “Americans are not a people without virtues. But their virtues are those of production, organization, reason, and work. Their virtues were neither of social and human leadership nor of manners and emotions.”⁷⁶ Qutb maintained that if the United States had any leadership role to play in the world, it was in the areas of production and material accomplishments; in his view, the United States offered nothing in terms of moral or educational leadership.⁷⁷

He maintained that Americans engaged in production for its own sake and that they did not pursue these activities in order to achieve moral and spiritual strength or to attain greater levels of compassion. This tendency was evident in what Qutb saw as Americans’ obsessive attitudes about their work, their constant desire to acquire more possessions, and their hopes to impress people around them with their worldly success. One specific way that Qutb saw these fixations as manifesting themselves was in the overwhelming attention that people in Greeley, Colorado gave to the lawns, flowers, and shrubbery around their homes. As an Egyptian, Qutb found it unusual that homeowners in Greeley seemed to spend much of their free time cutting, watering, or fertilizing their lawns and taking other measures to assure the beauty of trees and shrubs. He found these behaviors to be yet another manifestation of Americans’ misplaced priorities and their desire to impress others in superficial ways.⁷⁸

Qutb also experienced the brunt of bigotry when he was in the United States. He felt that some Americans were hostile to him because of his dark skin color. He was also deeply troubled by the United States’ support of Israel (which declared independence and received recognition from the United States the year Qutb began his sojourn there) as well as the negative portrayal of Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood in the American media. Qutb was particularly shocked by what he characterized as “the happy and joyous American reception” of Hasan al-Banna’s assassination in 1949.⁷⁹ For Qutb, the United States’ hostility toward Islam was as evident within the country as it was in its foreign policy.⁸⁰

Qutb found American attitudes toward sex and sexuality particularly disdainful. His recounting of a dance in a church in Greeley, Colorado provides a vivid depiction of his views on male-female relations in the United

States. He states that while the church is supposed to be a place of worship in Christianity, “it is in America for everything except worship,” and that laypersons and clergy consider the church “a place for meeting, friendliness, and for having a good time.”⁸¹ As evidence of what Qutb perceives to be the defilement of a church’s sacred space and the inappropriate mixing of the sexes, he writes:

The dance hall [in the church] was lit with red and blue flashes and a few white lamps. While people were listening to music from a gramophone, dancing intensified, the dance floor started swarming with legs, hands embraced others’ waists, and lips touched. The whole atmosphere was of romance. Then the minister came from his office, gave a searching look at the place and the people present, and encouraged those who were sitting and not taking part in the dance to participate.... [In order to intensify the romantic ambience,] he turned off the lights one by one, while not obstructing the dancers’ movements.... Then he chose another dance record suitable to the atmosphere, and encouraged those who were sitting to take part in the dance. He chose a famous song called “But, baby its cold outside.”⁸²

As a Muslim, Qutb believed that men and women who are not married to each other must remain separate and absolutely no physical contact should take place between them, because any such contact can be sexually stimulating and potentially lead to premarital or extra-marital sex. Qutb found it particularly offensive that such contact took place in a Christian place of worship and was encouraged by the minister, who in Qutb’s view was the very person who should have discouraged it. Qutb would find such behavior between men and women absolutely unthinkable in a mosque. He believed that this kind of loose and, in his view, sexually provocative behavior, especially in a space intended for worship, was a prime example of Christianity’s and the West’s moral degradation.⁸³

By the end of his two years in the United States, Qutb was convinced of his Islamic beliefs and knew that he did not want his native Egypt to be a reflection of American culture in any way. He returned to Egypt in the summer of 1951 and became a member of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁸⁴ In 1952, he was elected to the Brotherhood’s leadership council and was appointed to chair its committee for the spread of Islam.⁸⁵ In July 1954, Hasan al-Hudaybi, the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood at the time, appointed Qutb as editor-in-chief of the Brotherhood’s newspaper entitled *The Muslim Brotherhood*.⁸⁶ After a Muslim Brother attempted to assassinate Gamal Abd al-Nasser in October 1954, Sayyid Qutb, much like other militant members of the Muslim Brotherhood, was given a lengthy prison sentence – in his case it was 25 years of hard labor – for his alleged role in the assassination attempt and in conspiring to overthrow Egypt’s government.⁸⁷

Although illness forced Qutb to spend much of his time in the prison infirmary, he was aware of the horrific conditions that surrounded him in Tura prison (located in a southern suburb of Cairo) where he was held.⁸⁸ The imprisoned Brothers lived in constant paralyzing fear of being killed by prison guards, and they and Qutb were brutally tortured.⁸⁹ Several of the prisoners, terrified that they would be killed if they went to their daily work assignment of rock breaking, refused to go to work in June 1957, locking themselves in their cells.⁹⁰ Armed soldiers then entered the prison cells and killed 21 of these Muslim Brothers.⁹¹ As Qutb reflected on these deaths and the merciless tortures, the assassination of Hasan al-Banna in 1949, and the 1954 hangings of the Muslim Brotherhood members found guilty of the assassination attempt on Gamal Abd al-Nasser, he concluded that Nasser, the prison guards, soldiers, and others who were part of Nasser's government could not be called Muslims, even though they considered themselves to be Muslims.

Qutb believed that it was impossible for any true Muslim to treat other Muslims, or any other human beings, with such barbaric and heartless cruelty. Qutb implied that Nasser himself, as well as the guards and torturers, had completely forgotten God.⁹² Qutb's writings suggested that people who worked for the Egyptian government no longer worshipped God, but idolized Nasser and the state instead. These secularized individuals, who called themselves Muslims, ignored the ideals of justice, compassion, and mercy that the Quran proclaimed and, in doing so, had rejected Islam. These ideas and experiences became the groundwork for one of Qutb's most influential contributions to modern Islamic thought, which was his book *Milestones*, first published in 1964.⁹³ Yet, because Qutb feared retribution from Nasser and the Egyptian government, he did not specifically name Nasser or the Egyptian government; rather, the descriptions in his writings strongly suggest that he was referring to Nasser's government and similar regimes.⁹⁴

In the midst of the tension and suffering he and other prisoners experienced, Qutb used part of his time in Tura prison to write *Milestones*, one of his most famous and widely read works. In this book, Qutb adapts the classic Islamic notion of *jahiliyya* (or ignorance) for his contemporary setting. Before Qutb's *Milestones*, one common understanding of *jahiliyya* among Muslims was that it referred to virtually all non-Islamic people beginning from the time of Muhammad. In other words, throughout much of Islamic history, one understanding of this word was in reference to people who were ignorant (*jahil*) of Islam. For example, during the life of Muhammad, the non-Muslims who attacked him and his early community were one group who were considered to be part of (seventh-century) *jahili* culture. Historically, many Muslims believe that one reason that Muhammad and the early Muslim community were justified in taking up arms against their attackers *was precisely because these attackers were not Muslims*.

As Islam expanded over the centuries, Muslim intellectuals drew a distinction between Muslim regions (which were then by definition part of *Dar al-Islam* or the “House of Islam”), on the one hand, and non-Muslim regions (which were part of *Dar al-Harb* or the “House of War”), on the other. *Dar al-Harb* was a reference to the regions where ignorance of Islam (*jahiliyya*) predominated.

Although before Qutb’s time, there was precedent in Islamic history for one group of Muslims denouncing another group of Muslims as non-Muslims. For example, the medieval Damascene Muslim intellectual Taqi al-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) developed an Islamically-based worldview that branded the invading Mongols as non-Muslims for the purpose of enabling Muslims of the Middle East to defend themselves against the Mongols.⁹⁵ Qutb made a pivotal contribution to Islamist thought in applying the notion of *jahiliyya* (ignorance) to: (1) people in the twentieth century who considered themselves Muslim and in Qutb’s opinion were not, and (2) other non-Muslims. Specifically, Qutb implied that Nasser and members of the Egyptian government were members of a *jahili* (ignorant) society because: (1) they treated other Muslims with extreme brutality in such a way that contradicted the teachings of the Quran and Hadith; (2) they believed that they, and not God, were sovereign; and (3) they were idolaters in the sense that they worshipped the state and its leaders instead of God.

Qutb contended there are three other kinds of *jahili* societies:

- 1 Communist societies, which are based in part on atheism and in which the object of worship is the Communist Party.
- 2 Various idolatrous societies where the highest sovereignty is exercised in the name of the people, the party, or any other earthly institution. Such societies would include any oligarchy or dictatorship whose governing principles are not based on Islam.
- 3 Societies where Jews and Christians are in the majority and, secondarily, other Jews and Christians. Although during Islamic history many Muslims have believed that Jews and Christians who practice their religion should be given protected status as people of the book, Qutb believed that Jews and Christians are *jahili*, by virtue of their rejection of Islam and their hostile actions toward Islam, as manifested through colonialism as well as the establishment and perpetuation of the modern state of Israel.⁹⁶

In sharp contrast to these *jahili* cultures, Qutb envisioned what he perceived to be the true Islamic society, which, he believed, should be based on the Quran, Hadith, and Sharia law, and would be comprised of true Muslim rulers, who would, among other things, support Islamic education and invoke strict laws governing the relations between Muslim men and women.⁹⁷

In addition to presenting his definition of *jahili* society and asserting his vision for the ideal Islamic state, Qutb described the process by which *jahili* society should be dismantled and an Islamic state constructed in its place. For him, the establishment of the true Islamic state would require a revolution led by a vanguard comprised of true Muslims who would model their beliefs and actions on those of the first Quranic generation (i.e., the Prophet Muhammad's companions).⁹⁸ Qutb believed that this first generation had almost perfectly emulated the ideals of the Quran, Hadith, and Muhammad's life and teachings. As soon as Muslims allowed themselves to be influenced by the non-Islamic ideas and practices of Byzantium and Persia, their religion began to be contaminated.⁹⁹

According to Qutb, the contemporary vanguard must fully absorb the Quran's teaching and reject every aspect of *jahili* culture.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, for Qutb there are two stages in the procession from the birth of the Islamic vanguard to the establishment of a true Islamic society. First, there is the phase of spiritual maturation, which is the stage where members of the Muslim vanguard comprehend the Quran's true meaning and reject the ideas and practices of *jahili* culture. The second phase involves the actual battle against *jahili* society. Qutb directly states that this battle or type of jihad must be physical in nature and he vociferously criticizes Muslims and others who have defined jihad solely as self-defense or solely in peaceful terms.¹⁰¹

For Qutb the only legitimate choice that people have is to choose Islam. In this spirit, Qutb maintains that Muslims have a duty to take up arms against the *jahili* forces, much like Muhammad and the early Muslim community of his day took up arms to physically fight the *jahili* powers of their day. Qutb believes that physically fighting the *jahili* forces is fully consistent with Muhammad's actions and the Quran's proclamations. Qutb states that for the first 13 years after Muhammad received the first revelation (in Qutb's estimation the period from 610 until 623), Muhammad called "people to God through preaching, without fighting ... and was commanded to restrain himself and to practice patience and forbearance."¹⁰² After God commanded Muhammad and the early Muslim community to emigrate (or engage in the *hijra*) to Medina, God commanded "Muhammad to fight those who fought him and to restrain himself from those who did not make war with him."¹⁰³ Qutb states that at some point after that, God commanded Muhammad "to fight the polytheists" until Islam was "fully established."¹⁰⁴ Qutb interpreted physical jihad and its relationship with the making and breaking of peace treaties during Muhammad's lifetime by stating that according to God's command, "as long as the non-believers with whom [Muhammad] had a peace treaty met their obligations, he should fulfill the articles of the treaty, but if [the non-believers] broke this treaty, then they should be given notice of having broken it; until then, no war should be declared. If [the non-believers] persisted, then he should fight with them."¹⁰⁵

Qutb buttresses his stance in favor of physical jihad against *jahili* society by quoting a variety of Quranic passages and several examples from the life of Muhammad.¹⁰⁶ Qutb believes that the *jahili* societies of the polytheists (during Muhammad's day and afterwards) and those of the Persians and Byzantines (during Muhammad's time and afterwards) had to be opposed using physical means, because warfare was the only way that seventh- and eighth-century Muslims could resist the overwhelming power of those regimes which attempted to perpetuate falsehood and oppression. In the same way, during Qutb's own time, Qutb believed that Muslims had to use physical force to destroy *jahili* political and social structures and replace them with the rightful religious, political, and social institutions dictated by Islam.

Qutb believed that anytime a true Islamic state or society was created, human freedom was absolutely guaranteed. That is, he believed that *jahili* governments, by virtue of the fact that they do not accord supreme authority to God and God's law and, as such, give ultimate authority to human beings, are oppressive and unjust.¹⁰⁷ It must be remembered that Qutb wrote *Milestones* while in prison and that incarceration placed a heavy burden upon him. Related to this, Qutb found Gamal Abd al-Nasser's regime to be intensely oppressive to the Muslim Brotherhood and to any other form of dissent. Thus, Qutb longed for freedom – for the whole of Egyptian society, for his fellow Muslims worldwide, and for himself. He was convinced that when God's laws were properly instituted, freedom for all people – both Muslim and non-Muslim – would be the natural outcome.¹⁰⁸ In this vein, Qutb wrote:

Islam does not force people to accept its belief, but it wants to provide a free environment in which they will have the choice of beliefs. What it wants is to abolish those oppressive political systems under which people are prevented from expressing their freedom to choose whatever beliefs they want, and after that it gives them complete freedom to decide whether they will accept Islam or not.¹⁰⁹

Qutb believed that Muslims should engage in a step-by-step process as they work to dismantle the *jahili* forces. The physical jihad against these forces must begin locally, then move to the national and international fronts, since much of the world is dominated by *jahili* cultures.¹¹⁰ In a limited way, Qutb's hope that Islam's influence would spread was manifested in the Muslim Brotherhood's expansion to numerous countries in the Muslim world.¹¹¹ Ayman al-Zawahiri and Usama bin Laden, who were heirs of aspects of Qutb's thought, attempted – through the establishment of al-Qaida – to expand Islam's confrontation with *jahili* cultures into the international realm.¹¹²

Qutb was in prison until 1964. He was released briefly during that year because of the intervention of Iraq's President 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif and was

placed under police surveillance.¹¹³ Eight months after his release, Qutb was arrested again on charges of preparing armed revolt and terrorism.¹¹⁴ He was tried, convicted, sentenced to death, and hanged on those charges and sedition; his execution took place on August 29, 1966.¹¹⁵ Because of his execution at the hands of the government which he opposed and his willingness to die for his strongly held beliefs, Islamists and other Muslims have viewed Sayyid Qutb as a highly-esteemed martyr for the Muslim cause.¹¹⁶

The Muslim Brotherhood and Islamism in Egypt after Sayyid Qutb

One result of the imprisonment of large numbers of Muslim Brothers during the 1950s and 1960s under Gamal Abd al-Nasser and the distribution of Sayyid Qutb's ideas was the formation of small Egyptian Islamist groups that could be considered offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood. Some of the members of some of these groups were former members of the Muslim Brotherhood and had endured torture in Egypt's prisons. The best known of these small Egyptian Islamist groups are the Military Technical College Organization, the Society of the Muslims (not to be confused with the Muslim Brotherhood), the Jihad Organization, and al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya. These groups interpreted Sayyid Qutb's ideas in a variety of ways and had differing strategies for either relating to or opposing what they considered *jahili* societies.¹¹⁷

The history of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood after Sayyid Qutb's execution is complex. Yet, the Brotherhood's prevailing worldview in the years after his death is one that is at times marked by the Brotherhood's attempts at involvement in the mainstream of Egypt's political process. While the Muslim Brotherhood had remained formally illegal (or at best extralegal) during periods since Qutb's death, members of the Muslim Brotherhood have run for office in Egypt's parliament under the banner of other parties and they have attempted to spread their Islamist worldview and expand their religious and political influence through numerous professional and student organizations.¹¹⁸

The Muslim Brotherhood has also spread its ideas and exerted its position in Egyptian society by providing a wide range of social services such as food, jobs, health care, schools, and banking services.¹¹⁹ The Muslim Brotherhood has a reputation for providing services in areas where the state has either failed or has shown considerable weakness. One widespread saying in Egypt about the Muslim Brotherhood summarizes some people's attitudes toward its services, "When the Muslim Brothers are asked, they open the drawer and give you something. When you ask government officials, they open the drawer and they ask you to give [them] something."¹²⁰ During the late

twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist organizations in Egypt have been able to encourage the implementation of some laws consistent with Islamist priorities in such areas as marriage, family, and education.¹²¹

Yet, there have been offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood that have emphasized violence and militancy as Islamically justifiable and necessary methods for beginning the transformation of societies toward what these Muslim militants believe to be “truly Islamic” societies. One of the most militant interpretations and implementations of some of the Muslim Brotherhood’s and Sayyid Qutb’s ideas was constructed by Ayman al-Zawahiri, a significant intellectual force behind the establishment of al-Qaida. As a Muslim intellectual and activist, Zawahiri is one of the most influential figures responsible for the internationalizing of physical jihad. Zawahiri emphasizes the aspects of Qutb’s thought which emphasize the notion that all non-Islamic cultures are *jahili* and have been contributing to the degradation of Islam. Zawahiri also strongly gravitates toward Qutb’s ideas that Muslims have an obligation to engage in physical jihad against *jahili* states outside of the majority-Muslim world, especially when such states threaten Muslims.

Zawahiri was born into an aristocratic and observant Muslim family in 1951 in an affluent suburb of Cairo.¹²² He was an excellent student and when he became tired of studying, he did not spend time with other children or watch television; rather, he read the Quran and books about Islam.¹²³ Like others in his family, Zawahiri said his prayers regularly and attended several courses in Quranic interpretation, Quranic recitation, and Islamic law at the mosque he and his family attended.¹²⁴ Zawahiri completed elementary and secondary school in the Cairo area. He earned a degree in medicine from the Faculty of Medicine at Cairo University in 1974, a Master’s degree in surgery from Cairo University in 1978, and a doctorate in surgery from a University in Pakistan, while he lived in Peshawar.¹²⁵ In 1979, Zawahiri married ‘Azza Ahmed Nuwair (who earned a degree in philosophy from the Faculty of Arts at Cairo University) in a conservative Muslim wedding in a large Cairo hotel.¹²⁶ Zawahiri led an Islamist cell in Egypt from his mid-teen years and continued to do so until 1981 when, at the age of 30, he was arrested for conspiring to assassinate the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.¹²⁷ As Zawahiri quietly participated in the Islamist cause, he secretly provided members of his cell with an education about various aspects of Islam, about the reasons he believed most of the world’s governments were infidel, and about modes of Islamist resistance.¹²⁸

The assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat on October 6, 1981 was a life-changing event for Zawahiri.¹²⁹ Sadat’s assassin, Khalid Islambuli, was a member of Egypt’s Islamic Jihad organization which formed in 1979 under the leadership of Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj,

an engineer in the administration of the University of Cairo; Zawahiri was empathetic to that group's worldview and goals.¹³⁰ Faraj's interpretation of the Quran and Hadith, which was influenced by the ideas of Sayyid Qutb, stated that when a majority-Muslim country is under the rule of a government whose laws and political ideologies are atheistic (as Faraj believed was the case with Egypt), Muslims have the obligation to kill the political leader or leaders so that "true Muslims" may assume leadership, creating a "purely Islamic state."¹³¹ As a believer in this Islamic worldview, Islambuli assassinated Sadat with the hope that, after he died, Egyptians would immediately engage in a massive revolt, toppling the members of the existing secular regime, and establish an Islamic state.¹³² No such revolution occurred at that time and Sadat's Vice-President, Hosni Mubarak, became Egypt's President directly after Sadat's death.¹³³

Members of the Egyptian government suspected Zawahiri of being a conspirator in Sadat's assassination and, much like Qutb, Zawahiri was imprisoned, interrogated, and tortured.¹³⁴ Montasser al-Zayyat, who was imprisoned at the same time as Zawahiri, stated that when the Egyptian security forces brought suspects to the Citadel prison where Zawahiri was held, "they took off their clothes, handcuffed them, blindfolded them, then started beating them with sticks and slapping them on the face Ayman was beaten all the time – every day. [The officials] sensed that he had a lot of information."¹³⁵ Indeed, the torture which Zawahiri endured during his three years in prison strengthened his already profound opposition to the secular Egyptian government, the Western governments that supported it, and virtually everything associated with what Zawahiri considered *jahili* cultures.¹³⁶

One incident during Zawahiri's imprisonment manifests some of the hardships which Zawahiri and other prisoners who were implicated in the assassination attempt experienced; this event also provided a forum for Zawahiri to express his own religious and political viewpoints. The defendants in Sadat's assassination, some of whom were adolescents, were temporarily imprisoned in a large zoo-like cage which occupied the greater portion of an enormous makeshift courtroom in the exhibition grounds in Cairo, where fairs and conventions are often held.¹³⁷ The other defendants chose Zawahiri as their spokesperson and international news organizations covered these events and the trial.¹³⁸

The video footage, which was shot on December 4, 1982, the opening day of the trial, shows the roughly 300 defendants chanting, praying, and attempting to convey messages to family members.¹³⁹ As the prisoners fell silent, Zawahiri began addressing the cameras:

Now we want to speak to the whole world. Who are we? Why did they bring us here and what do we want to say? About the first question, we are Muslims.

We are Muslims who believe in their religion. We are Muslims who believe in their religion [sic], both in ideology and practice, and hence we tried our best to establish an Islamic state and an Islamic society.

In response, the other imprisoned defendants stated the Muslim declaration, “There is no God, but God.” Zawahiri continued in a sermonic chant-like cadence:

We are here – the real Islamic front and the real Islamic opposition against Zionism, Communism, and imperialism Now, as an answer to the second question, “Why did they bring us here?” They brought us here for two reasons. First, they are trying to abolish the outstanding Islamic movement ... and, secondly, to complete the conspiracy of evacuating the area in preparation for the Zionist infiltration.

The other prisoners responded by saying, “We will not sacrifice the blood of the Muslims for the Americans and the Jews.”¹⁴⁰ Then, the prisoners raised their robes to show their scars and scabs from torture. Zawahiri explained the torture that took place in the

dirty Egyptian jails ... where we suffered the severest inhuman treatment. There they kicked us, they beat us, they whipped us with electric cables, they shocked us with electricity and they used wild dogs. And they hung us over the edges of the doors with our hands tied behind our backs. They arrested the wives, the mothers, the fathers, the sisters, and the sons.

The defendants responded by declaring, “The army of Muhammad will return, and we will defeat the Jews.” Zawahiri then stated the names of prisoners who he believed died as a result of torture, and continued, “So where is democracy? Where is freedom? Where is human rights? Where is justice? We will never forget.”¹⁴¹

The extended and dramatic video footage dramatically portrays Zawahiri articulating some of the main principles of his Islamist ideals at the time and, for many Islamists, the event is emblematic of his courage. While in the zoo-like prison, Zawahiri was willing to publicly state his message and his criticisms of the current state of affairs, knowing that his torture could be intensified and his prison term lengthened as a result. This event also constituted what may have been the first time Zawahiri received extended television coverage and one of the initial occasions he appeared on television as an Islamist leader and spokesperson. In the years to come, he would continue to play a role as an articulate and outspoken leader for this Islamist cause.

Another circumstance related to Zawahiri’s imprisonment was his relationship with fellow-Islamist leader Sheikh Umar Abd al-Rahman, who

was convicted of being part of the conspiracy which led to the first attack against the World Trade Center in New York City on February 26, 1993. Abd al-Rahman was in the same Egyptian prison as Zawahiri in the early 1980s because Abd al-Rahman was also suspected of conspiring in the assassination of Anwar Sadat.¹⁴² Before his imprisonment, Abd al-Rahman taught courses related to Islam at the Asyut branch of al-Azhar University in Upper Egypt, where he developed a strong following among some of the Islamist students there. He also became an adviser to al-Gam'iyya al-Islamiyya, which was one of the largest Islamist student groups in the country.¹⁴³

As Anwar Sadat ordered mass round-ups of Islamists during the 1970s, Abd al-Rahman traveled to Saudi Arabia and other majority-Muslim countries soliciting financial contributions for Islamists in Egypt. In 1980, Abd al-Rahman returned to Egypt as the adviser and head of al-Gam'iyya al-Islamiyya. In one of Abd al-Rahman's fatwas (religio-legal rulings), without specifying Anwar Sadat by name, Abd al-Rahman stated that Muslims have an obligation to assassinate *jahili* rulers. In the trial for Sadat's assassination, Abd al-Rahman's attorney stated that because Abd al-Rahman had not actually named Sadat, he could not be considered as an essential part of the assassination conspiracy and he was released.¹⁴⁴

While Zawahiri and Abd al-Rahman were in prison, they bitterly disagreed as to who should lead Egypt's Islamists, should both of them be released. Each one thought that he should be the leader. Abd al-Rahman had been blinded by diabetes in childhood and Zawahiri stated that according to Sharia an emir (or Muslim leader) cannot be blind, thus disqualifying Abd al-Rahman for the leadership position. In response, Abd al-Rahman's position involved the argument that the leader of the Islamist groups in Egypt could not be considered an emir because emirs are supposed to lead "truly Islamic states" that already exist and since no truly Islamic state exists, the leader of these groups cannot be considered an emir. Since such a leader cannot be considered an emir, a blind person can lead the Islamist groups.¹⁴⁵ This bitter argument between Abd al-Rahman and Zawahiri led to a major and long-lasting rift between the two men.¹⁴⁶ Eventually, Abd al-Rahman was allowed to enter the United States legally, became an Imam at a mosque in New York City, was convicted of conspiring in the attacks on the World Trade Center in February 1993, and was given a life sentence by an American court.¹⁴⁷ Most Islamists believed that because of the limited damage to the World Trade Center as a result of the 1993 attack and the fact that American foreign policy toward the majority-Muslim world did not considerably change as a result of it, that first attack did not constitute a major success. Partly for those reasons and because many Islamists viewed the World Trade Center as a symbol of Western colonialism and hegemony, Zawahiri and Bin Laden decided to launch a second and more catastrophic attack on that site in 2001.¹⁴⁸

Zawahiri was released from prison in 1984 and, fearing retribution because of his suspected involvement in Sadat's assassination, he left Egypt for Jidda, Saudi Arabia, where he met Usama bin Laden. Then, Zawahiri went to Peshawar, Pakistan, which was a major base of operations for the Islamist guerrillas (mujahideen) opposed to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (which began in December 1979) and the Soviets' continued occupation of that country.¹⁴⁹ The governments of the United States and Pakistan were also using Peshawar as a center for providing support to the mujahideen.¹⁵⁰ Islamists from many parts of the majority-Muslim world were coming to Peshawar and Afghanistan to join the Afghanis in their militant struggle against Soviet occupation.¹⁵¹ In Peshawar, Ayman al-Zawahiri worked with his brother, Muhammad, and others, to reconstitute Egypt's Islamic Jihad organization; however, on this occasion, one of the group's primary goals would be to combat the Soviet occupation.¹⁵² Under Zawahiri's leadership, Islamic Jihad succeeded in recruiting small numbers of Egyptian Muslims to join the war against Soviet occupation.

In the view of Zawahiri and other Islamists during the 1980s, one of the reasons that the Islamists had had limited success in achieving their goals of toppling "non-Islamic" governments in the majority-Muslim world was because the Islamists did not have adequate amounts of money.¹⁵³ In addition to apparent affinities in personality and ideology between Zawahiri and Usama bin Laden, one of the reasons that Zawahiri attempted to forge close ties with Bin Laden in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation and subsequent periods may have been because of Bin Laden's enormous wealth and the possibility that Bin Laden could use this wealth to benefit the Islamist cause.¹⁵⁴ One of the ways that Zawahiri deepened his relationship with Bin Laden was by consistently providing Bin Laden with medical care during that war in Afghanistan.¹⁵⁵ The two were also brought closer together as a result of the hardships they experienced in the warfare against the Soviets. The Soviets began a full retreat from Afghanistan in 1989, which Zawahiri, Bin Laden, and other Islamists claimed as a God-given victory for Muslims. Soon after the Soviet pull-out, the Islamists in Afghanistan, including Zawahiri, held a meeting in Khost, Afghanistan in 1989 where they decided to create a confederation of Islamist groups that would carry physical jihad outside of Afghanistan with the goal of ridding majority-Muslim countries of all non-Islamic influence, including that of the United States and Israel. These Islamist conferees decided that the organization would be called al-Qaida (which means "the base" in Arabic) and that Usama bin Laden, who possessed more money than any of the Islamist leaders in Afghanistan, would be its leader.¹⁵⁶

After Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, Usama bin Laden went to Saudi Arabia, his country of birth, and told the Saudi government that he was willing to bring the mujahideen from Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia to

help the Saudi government eject Iraq from Kuwait and to assist the Saudi government in defending Saudi Arabia from a possible Iraqi invasion.¹⁵⁷ The Saudi government declined Bin Laden's offer and decided to rely on what Bin Laden considered the "infidel countries" of the United States and its allies to eject Iraqi soldiers from Kuwait and to defend Saudi Arabia.¹⁵⁸

Soon after the Soviet pull-out from Afghanistan, civil war ensued in Afghanistan and, within that context, there was fighting among Islamist groups in that country, even though several of them had brought themselves under the confederation of al-Qaida. Bin Laden, deeply frustrated by the Saudis' rejection of his offer and the in-fighting among Islamist groups in Afghanistan, went to Khartoum, Sudan, where he aligned himself with the Sudanese Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi (b. 1932) and where Bin Laden attempted to establish a stable base of operations for creating a "truly Islamic state" in Sudan. Bin Laden also wanted to use his time in Sudan to make efforts to expunge the United States' military, political, economic, and religious influence from the majority-Muslim world. Zawahiri followed Bin Laden to Sudan, where the two cooperated in attempting to implement their operations and to make their Islamist vision a reality. In spite of Bin Laden's enormous wealth, he resisted donating substantial amounts to Zawahiri's Islamic Jihad group because of the serious disagreements about tactics between Islamic Jihad and other Islamist groups.¹⁵⁹

Zawahiri's Islamic Jihad had a number of members. Believing he needed to provide for them as their leader and hoping to expand the scope of his operations, Zawahiri went to mosques in California to raise funds. Zawahiri only raised a few hundred dollars on that trip and returned to Sudan to continue to cultivate his relationship with Bin Laden. Zawahiri persuaded Bin Laden to place some important members of Egypt's Islamic Jihad on al-Qaida's payroll. Although Islamic Jihad had been involved in the Afghan-Soviet war, Bin Laden's decision to fund Islamic Jihad's most important members influenced many in the group who wanted its main focus to be the overthrow of Egypt's secular government and to turn its attention toward internationalizing its jihad, with the hope of eventually establishing a global Islamic state under Islamic law. Thus, Bin Laden's decision to fund significant elements of Egypt's Islamic Jihad played a pivotal role in influencing members of the group to focus their attention on ridding the majority-Muslim world of all Western influences, while still attempting to overthrow Egypt's secularist regime.¹⁶⁰

The alliance between Bin Laden and Zawahiri enabled the newly-financed Islamic Jihad to use the base it shared jointly with al-Qaida in Sudan as a staging area for its operations against Egyptian governmental officials. These operations included failed assassination attempts against Egypt's Interior Minister and its Prime Minister in 1993 and against the country's President, Hosni Mubarak, in 1995. As a result of these attacks, the Egyptian

government engaged in severely repressive measures against Islamic Jihad, causing it to lose much of its membership in Egypt. Because of the possibility that American or Egyptian authorities might be able to locate and kill Bin Laden and Zawahiri in Sudan, the two of them made their way to Afghanistan where they felt they could have a higher level of security.¹⁶¹ The continued deepening of ties between Bin Laden and Islamic Jihad culminated in the World Islamic Front's "Statement of Jihad against Jews and Crusaders" which was issued by four Islamist groups including Egypt's Islamic Jihad on February 23, 1998.¹⁶² Among other things, this statement listed some of these Islamists' grievances against the West and restated their justification for launching attacks against Western interests.

Roughly five months later, in their effort to force the expulsion of American involvement in the majority-Muslim world, on August 7, 1998 al-Qaida militants engaged in virtually simultaneous attacks against the United States' embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killing 223 and injuring 5,000.¹⁶³ President Bill Clinton responded by ordering a military attack on Zawahiri's and Bin Laden's possible locations in Afghanistan and on what was later discovered to be a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan.¹⁶⁴ Bin Laden and Zawahiri remained safe during the attacks and, what some Muslims believed to be their heroic stance, gained them increased popularity in the eyes of some Muslims. The day after the United States' military strikes, Zawahiri called a journalist in Karachi, saying, "Tell the Americans that we aren't afraid of bombardment, threats, and acts of aggression. We suffered and survived the Soviet bombings for ten years in Afghanistan and we are ready for more sacrifices. The war has only just begun; the Americans should now await the answer."¹⁶⁵ The answer came on September 11, 2001.

Influences on Zawahiri's Thought

Sayyid Qutb's life and ideas had a substantial impact on Zawahiri.¹⁶⁶ In Zawahiri's *Knights Under the Banner of the Prophet*, he wrote:

Sayyid Qutb underscored the importance of monotheism in Islam, and that the battle between it and its enemies is at its core an ideological difference over the issue of the oneness of God. It is the issue of who has the power: God and his Sharia or human beings and their materialistic laws ... Although the Qutb group was oppressed and tortured by Nasser's regime, the group's influence on young Muslims was paramount. Qutb's message was and still is to be believed in the oneness of God and the supremacy of the divine path. This message fanned the fire of Islamic revolution against the enemies of Islam at home and abroad. The chapters of this revolution are renewing one day after another.¹⁶⁷

This idea is Zawahiri's adaptation of the classic Islamic notion of God's oneness (*tawhid*), which Qutb interprets for revolutionary purposes. Like Qutb, Zawahiri believes that when *jahili* nation-states (such as Egypt) are secular, the leaders attempt to make themselves or the state itself partners to God by elevating one or both of these entities to a very high status, thus violating the notion of God's oneness. For example, Zawahiri states that historically Egypt's secular dictators and their governments have attempted to make themselves partners to or even equal to God when they use violent force and other oppressive means to quash Islamists who want to overthrow all secular states in the majority-Muslim world. By engaging in such violent acts and through the adulation that they want citizens to give to secular states and their leaders, these authoritarian rulers attempt to give the states and themselves a God-like status, which is one of the many reasons that Islamists want to overthrow such leaders. Qutb's words are very meaningful to Zawahiri because for him they constitute one "true" interpretation of the Quran and, concomitantly, Qutb died (or in Zawahiri's view "was martyred") in his endeavors to fulfill God's commands. As a "true Muslim" leader himself, Zawahiri believes that his life could well have followed the pattern of Qutb's.

Another influence on Zawahiri's thought was that of the Palestinian-born Islamist Salih Sirriya (1933–74), who was a leader of the Islamist organization that came to be known as Egypt's Military Academy Group. Sirriya and several members of his group organized a failed assassination attempt on President Anwar Sadat in 1974, with the hope that, had it succeeded, Egyptian Muslims would have immediately begun an Islamic revolution which would have toppled the secular government.¹⁶⁸ For Zawahiri, one of the most significant aspects of Sirriya's and his group's assassination attempt against Sadat was that it marked yet another occasion (in addition to the assassination attempt against Gamal Abd al-Nasser in 1954) when Islamists had attempted to use force to revolt against a secular government.¹⁶⁹

Influenced by Sirriya and other Islamists, Zawahiri believes that one of several justifiable tactics in Muslims' endeavor to establish Islamic states is to assassinate the secular leaders with the hope that Muslims who agree with the Islamists' objectives will then mobilize themselves and use a variety of tactics to overthrow the remaining members of secularist governments. Although previous assassinations of secular leaders in majority-Muslim countries have not led to such mobilizations, Zawahiri believes that since secular governments utterly contradict both Sharia law and God's intentions for majority-Muslim societies, the successful implementation of the Islamist groups' goals is inevitable because God will eventually enable them to succeed.¹⁷⁰

Much like many other Islamists, including Sirriya, Zawahiri believes that the nations in the majority-Muslim world which are under secular

governments are in a state of *fitnah*, which is a word of long-standing use among Muslims historically, and means chaos and disorder. For Zawahiri, in the contemporary majority-Muslim world this state of *fitnah* is represented by several characteristics, including: (a) secular leaders' attempts to give themselves and the states which they lead a virtually invincible status (which in Zawahiri's view represents an attempt on the part of some secularists to place the state and its leaders on a level equal to God); (b) the proliferation of Western websites, movies, newspapers, magazines, and other modes of expression in the majority-Muslim world; (c) the honoring of greed, and sexual promiscuity; (d) the presence of Western educational methods; and (e) the enormous gap between rich and poor which exists in many majority-Muslim countries. Zawahiri and Sirriya both believe that these and other "anti-Islamic" tendencies in the majority-Muslim world have created chaotic and disordered situations in those countries, and since the secular leaders and laws of those countries are *jahili* and lie at the source of the *fitnah*, the Islamists have an obligation to kill them in order to open the possibility of what the Islamists conceive as "truly Islamic states."¹⁷¹

For Sirriya and later for Zawahiri, one mistake of certain Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, was their gradualist approach to obtaining power, which involved first preparing the individual, then mobilizing the society, then ultimately establishing the Islamic state. Under the influence of Sirriya and other Islamists whose point of view was similar to his, Zawahiri believed that one possible course of action that Islamist groups, including al-Qaida, should follow would involve seizing control of current states through the overthrow of current governments which were not led by "true Muslims." The Islamists could then proceed directly to the task of creating a society shaped according to their goals and beliefs.¹⁷²

At the same time, for Zawahiri, there are two kinds of enemies against which al-Qaida and its allies must wage physical jihad, the near enemies and the far enemies. If one understands the countries of the Middle East or other majority-Muslim countries as Zawahiri's physical starting point, the "near enemies" refer to the states in the majority-Muslim world whose leaders and governments, in Zawahiri's view, are not truly Islamic. Concomitantly, the "far enemies" are comprised, in part, of the Western nations who, in Zawahiri's opinion, have waged almost continual warfare against Muslims, through actual wars and colonialism, for example. These enemies are identified as "far" because of their relative physical distance from majority-Muslim countries.¹⁷³

According to Zawahiri, the near enemies and the far enemies are complicit with each other in a variety of ways. For example, Zawahiri maintains that Western countries, particularly the United States, have provided consistent financial, military, and strategic support to their own allies in the majority-Muslim world (such as Egypt and Pakistan to name just two) so

that the regimes in those countries can maintain their oppressive authoritarian rule which promotes non-Islamic ideas and practices and which perpetrates brutal acts of persecution against the Islamists who oppose them.¹⁷⁴

Zawahiri maintains that both the near and far enemies are *jahili* in that they have created mutually beneficial relationships where the Islamists are their common enemy. This is one of the reasons Zawahiri believes in the internationalization of physical jihad. He contends that all Islamists, no matter with which Islamist groups they affiliate, should make efforts to violently attack the near and far enemies. In this regard, for Zawahiri, there should be at least two foci to al-Qaida's efforts against the far enemy: these efforts should focus on violent attacks against Western interests *both inside and outside* of the majority-Muslim world because Western countries are the primary source of support for secular leaders throughout the majority-Muslim world. In Zawahiri's view, if these far enemies can be severely weakened or incapacitated, this could lead to the rapid deterioration of non-Islamic regimes in the majority-Muslim world which could embolden Islamist groups in those countries to overthrow those weakened regimes and establish "truly Islamic governments." This relates to al-Qaida's goal which involves its intent to coordinate and provide moral support to Islamist groups in various majority-Muslim countries who direct their efforts against existing governments in those countries.

Thus, for Zawahiri, the attacks of al-Qaida and those of other Islamist groups which are focused on assaulting the far enemy should take place simultaneously with the various Islamist groups which are struggling against non-Islamic regimes in the majority-Muslim world. According to Zawahiri, as al-Qaida and its allies strive to weaken and destroy existing Western governments, local Islamist groups should work to topple the non-Islamic regimes in the majority-Muslim world.

Contemporaneous with these strategies, Zawahiri maintains the importance of the establishment of an "Islamic base" somewhere in the majority-Muslim world. Among other things, this base would serve to coordinate the efforts of Islamist organizations throughout the world and function as a center of operations for the Islamists' military operations against their non-Islamic enemies, both near and far. Zawahiri writes, "Just as the victory of the armies is effective only when the infantry occupies the terrain, in the same way the victory of the Islamic jihad movement against the universal coalition, which is its enemy, can only be realized through the possession of an Islamic base within the Muslim world."¹⁷⁵ According to Zawahiri, since both the far and near enemies have identified majority-Muslim countries as the field of their military operations against the Islamists with their own military bases in those countries, Islamists must begin by creating at least one military base which could facilitate their own operations.

Zawahiri continues this argument by comparing the contemporary circumstances with those that Muslims faced during the Crusades in the Middle Ages:

Nur al-Din Muhammad [d. 1185] and Saladin [1138–93] (may God protect them) carried out numerous battles so that Nur al-Din could rid Damascus of the Crusaders and their allies in order to unify Syria under his command. Then, Nur al-Din sent Saladin to Egypt. While there, Saladin led a battle in order to conquer and unify Egypt. Then, the Sultan and Saladin seized Hattin [in northern Israel/Palestine], then liberated Jerusalem. At that point, the wheel of history began to turn against the Crusaders.¹⁷⁶

Like many twentieth- and twenty-first-century Islamists, Zawahiri draws a parallel between the Crusades (the bulk of which lasted between 1095 and 1291 and involved military attacks on Muslim lands by Western Christians where one of the Christians' main goals was to conquer Israel/Palestine) and the contemporary situation. In general, Zawahiri is expressing his belief that both the medieval Crusaders and modern Westerners had similar interests in conquering territories with majority-Muslim populations. In this passage, like many Islamists and Muslims in general, Zawahiri heroizes two figures who played significant roles in the eventual ousting of the Crusaders from Muslim lands during the Middle Ages: Nur al-Din Muhammad, the fifth ruler of the medieval Turkmen Artukid dynasty, who commanded the battle against the Christian rulers of Jerusalem in the twelfth century; and Saladin, the Kurdish vassal of Nur al-Din Muhammad, who carried out successful military campaigns in Egypt in 1171, in Syria in 1174, and significant portions of Israel/Palestine in 1187.¹⁷⁷

Nur al-Din Muhammad's and Saladin's successful leadership of Muslims against Crusaders and the Muslims' general success in forcing their retreat are models which Zawahiri presents for the contemporary struggles which Muslims face in their battles against Westerners in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Specifically for Zawahiri, much like establishing strong military and political bases in the Middle East enabled medieval Muslims to succeed in their wars against the Crusaders, so too the establishment of one or more military bases by Islamists in today's Middle East can help them succeed in their struggle against Western countries and their totalitarian Middle Eastern allies. Zawahiri believes that much as God blessed the Muslims who battled against the Crusaders, so too he has blessed and will bless the Muslims who battle against Western interests in the majority-Muslim world today. Zawahiri maintains that the Muslims engaged in this struggle must remain faithful and obedient to God, working fastidiously toward the goal of liberating Muslim lands.¹⁷⁸

Zawahiri also states that Muslims should not let temporary setbacks disappoint them. For example, he maintains that the destruction of al-Qaida's

bases in Afghanistan, which began with the United States' invasion of that country in October 2001, should not deter Islamists from their military actions against Western forces, partly because Afghanistan is not in the center of Islamic lands (as, he maintains, significant portions of the Middle East are). Zawahiri also believes that Islamists will eventually be able to create a powerful base somewhere in the center of Islamic lands, which, because of its geographic location and other factors, will be even more effective than the one in Afghanistan.¹⁷⁹

In addition, he believes that Muslims should not be disappointed by the length of time it has taken for Muslims to expel Westerners from Muslim lands. He suggests that while the victory of Saladin's army at Hattin in 1187 was a very positive strategic turning point for the Muslims in their warfare against the Crusaders, it was not until 1291 that the Muslim leader al-Malik al-Ashraf gained possession of the city of 'Akka in Israel/Palestine, destroyed that city, and put an end to Christian domination in that region. That victory is considered to be a successful culminating battle for the Muslim armies. By using these examples, Zawahiri is expressing the idea that final victory does not immediately follow the first strategic victory, and that much as Muslims had to wait 100 years after their first strategic victory during the Crusades for a final victory, so too today, Muslims must be patient in their battles against the West.¹⁸⁰

According to Zawahiri, one of several battles in which Muslims must engage against the West involves their fight against democratic institutions. For him, the only government that is justified by the Quran, Hadith, and Sunna is a caliphate, where a single Muslim religious and political leader rules every aspect of life in the majority-Muslim world. This single caliph would govern the religious, political, legal, economic, and social aspects of life in a single Islamic state. For Zawahiri, this is the only correct model for Muslims because God's revelation in the Quran and the example which Muhammad set are all-embracing and do not make any distinctions between various spheres of individual or societal life. Thus, a true Islamic government must make no distinctions between these aspects of life and a single caliph must rule in full accordance with the teachings of the Quran, Hadith, and Sunna. Such a government should not be influenced by the individual desires or predilections of the caliph or the citizens. Rather, the caliph would make all his decisions and administer the Islamic state based on the teachings of Islam's sacred texts.¹⁸¹

In criticizing democracy, Zawahiri calls democracy "a new religion," because he believes that in Islam (which is the only true religion) legislation rightly flows directly from God's commands, while in a democracy the capacity to legislate is incumbent upon the people.¹⁸² By conferring the right to legislate upon the people, and not upon God, democracies deify people and make the people in democratic societies partners with God, which, for

Zawahiri, is in absolute contradiction to Islam. While Egypt cannot be considered a democracy, Zawahiri cites the Egyptian constitution as an example of the ways in which one country has, in a misguided way, introduced democratic principles into its constitution.¹⁸³ According to him, the Egyptian constitution states, “sovereignty belongs only to the people which is the source of all capacities” and “the council of the people – Parliament – holds the legislative power.”¹⁸⁴ He believes that stipulations such as these attempt to make the people equal and similar to God.

Zawahiri states that according to the Quran’s definition of religion (he quotes Surahs 42:21 and 109:6), the true religion, namely Islam, is a system that enables human beings to distinguish between right and wrong.¹⁸⁵ Democracy has made the impiety of irreligious people (the Christians, the Communists, and the secularists, for example) a religion; the citizens who vote and those whom they elect are adored instead of God. For Zawahiri, this adoration constitutes a horrific and heretical form of corruption in the sense that Islam teaches that God’s law should be the most important entity which guides heavenly and earthly matters. Democracy undercuts this very important Islamic principle because, through its adoration of humans (as manifested by voters, elected officials, and the laws which they promulgate), this system of government places human beings, with all their selfishness and vain desires, in the role of leading states.¹⁸⁶

Zawahiri maintains that democracy violates the primary characteristic of God for Muslims, which involves God being the sole recipient of human adoration, and which also entails God having the exclusive power to establish rules, regulations, laws, and doctrines. In sharp contradiction to this principle, which Islamic law should reflect, democracies enable groups of human beings to create laws which embody their own desires, values, concepts, ideas, and compromises. The establishment of such principles by human beings has allowed democracy to become a religion created by humans’ states.¹⁸⁷

Zawahiri’s rejection of democracy is absolute and uncompromising. In addition to opposing existing democratic systems of government, Zawahiri vehemently criticizes Islamist organizations which have participated in democratic processes or which have adopted ostensibly democratic ideas as part of their goals. (The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Hamas among the Palestinians are examples of such organizations.) Thus, Zawahiri’s rejection of democracy puts him at odds with certain Islamist organizations, while also constituting one important element of his opposition to Western political systems.¹⁸⁸

One of the most salient differences between Zawahiri’s and al-Qaida’s religio-political worldview, on the one hand, and that of Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, on the other, is that al-Qaida emphasizes violent attacks as virtually the only means of overthrowing “non-Islamic”

governments and replacing them with “truly Islamic” governments worldwide. The Muslim Brotherhood and groups like it, while maintaining that violence may in some cases be justified, also affirm the importance of Islamists supporting Islamically-based literacy, health care, and social services (among other peaceful means) as ways of spreading the Islamist message and eventually overthrowing “non-Islamic” governments. These starkly different approaches in attempting to make religio-political changes in majority-Muslim societies have catalyzed enormous debate among (1) some Islamists who believe that Islamically-based social services should be emphasized by the Islamist movements, and (2) their Islamist opponents (such as members of al-Qaida) who believe that violence should be the sole means of revolting against the status quo and establishing “truly Islamic” governments globally, with the hope of eventually establishing a global Islamic state. Such debates will, in all likelihood, continue for many years to come.¹⁸⁹

Pan-Arab Egypt

With a total population of more than 80 million, approximately 90 percent of whom are Muslims, Egypt is the largest Arab country in the world, whose religious, cultural, linguistic, and literary influence stretches throughout most Arab countries and many majority-Muslim nations outside of the Arab world.¹⁹⁰ Particularly since the latter half of the twentieth century and in the early part of the twenty-first century, large numbers of Arabs inside and outside Egypt watch television shows and movies, listen to music, and read news, fiction, and other forms of information that are generated in Egypt.¹⁹¹ The influence of Egypt’s media on the rest of the Arab world is so great that many Arabs in parts of that region, who cannot speak any of Egypt’s Arabic dialects, can understand Cairo’s Arabic dialect because of the large number of television and radio programs and movies that are produced in or under the influence of that city.¹⁹² Through these forms of media, perceptions of certain sounds, images, and ideas from Egypt are in the minds of many Arabs.

Popular cultural forms are not the only components of these media streams. Islamist groups such as Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaida, which have some significant roots in Egypt, use that country as one base for disseminating their ideas into much of the Arab world and beyond. Indeed, the work of Egyptian Islamists, secularists, and other activists had an influence on other Arab (and non-Arab) protestors who resisted the governments in their countries in the wake of the Tunisian and Egyptian protests which began in early 2011.¹⁹³ This Pan-Arab Egypt has played a crucial role in the spreading of the ideas of Zawahiri and al-Qaida throughout much of the majority-Muslim world and outside of it. While Egypt was not

by any means the only catalyst in the spread of Zawahiri's and al-Qaida's ideas, it was that country's vibrant intellectual ferment that helped give rise to an Islamic intellectual genealogy – from Afghani to 'Abduh to Rida to al-Banna to Qutb to Zawahiri – which spread to Muslims in many parts of the world.

Indeed, one crucial Muslim leader and intellectual who espoused, rearticulated, and reembedded Zawahiri's and al-Qaida's ideology is the American-born Islamist Anwar al-Awlaki (b. 1971), who inspired the successful or attempted Islamist attacks in Fort Hood, Texas in November 2009, on a Detroit-bound Northwest Airlines flight on Christmas Day in the same year, and in Times Square in New York City in May 2010.¹⁹⁴ At some point after al-Qaida's attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, al-Awlaki underwent a transformation; he transitioned from believing in the importance of Muslims engaging in dialogue with non-Muslims to embracing and preaching Zawahiri's and al-Qaida's ideology of attacking Western interests with the ultimate goal of Islamists creating a global Islamist state.¹⁹⁵ Al-Awlaki's interpretation of history and justifications for attacking Westerners and Western interests closely match those of al-Qaida. From al-Qaida's perspective and those of its sympathizers, al-Awlaki's strengths include the fact that (1) he fully understands al-Qaida's ideology; (2) as an American-born Muslim of Yemeni parentage, he understands Western and Arab cultures; (3) he speaks English and Arabic; and (4) he is a charismatic preacher whose Islamist sermons in Arabic and English, which are carried on the Internet and a variety of other media, have persuaded other Muslims to attack or attempt to attack Western interests.¹⁹⁶ Some of the adherents of al-Awlaki's Zawahirian and al-Qaidian ideology include (1) United States Army Major Nidal Malik Hasan, who killed 13 people in the Islamist attack in Fort Hood, Texas on November 5, 2009; (2) Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who attempted to detonate explosives hidden in his undergarment in his unsuccessful attempt to kill all the passengers on a transatlantic Northwest Airlines flight en route from Amsterdam to Detroit on December 25, 2009; and (3) Faisal Shahzad, whose failed attack in Times Square in New York City on May 1, 2010 involved equipping a sport utility vehicle with explosives with the hope that its detonation would kill and injure as many people as possible.¹⁹⁷

These three persons, together with Zawahiri, al-Awlaki, and al-Qaida, operate within a globalized transnational ethos, where ideas, strategies, and actions can instantly cross borders in such a way that enables these Islamists and their allies to engage in religio-politically-based attacks with lightning-fast speed, news of which can reach billions of persons across the globe within seconds. While members of al-Qaida and other transnational resistance groups may still, in some measure, be restricted by the physical borders and other constraints imposed by nation-states, some of these

activists can exist within and, alternately, transcend such boundaries in pursuit of their goals.¹⁹⁸ As such Islamists articulate and attempt to achieve these objectives, they draw on the classic sacred texts of their religious traditions within a contemporary milieu that is radically different from the ancient contexts within which those texts emerged. Yet, these activists believe that those sacred texts speak directly to this and every other age, while inspiring these activists' actions. Virtually the entire contemporary world, including Egypt and almost every other nation-state (whether or not they have majority-Muslim populations), exists within this globalized transnational ethos and it is this highly accelerated, tightly interconnected environment which mobilizes the Islamists' ideologies and actions, while enabling the psychological and physical effects of their militant operations to be so profound.

Notes

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The West Bank, Gaza, and Israel

Many Jews and certain Christians believe that the land of Israel, as the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament calls it, belongs to the Jews. This land, which Muslims, some Christians, and others call Palestine, which stretches, roughly speaking, between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan River, has been contested by Jews, Christians, and Muslims over various periods of history. Jews and the Christians who agree with them believe that Israel/Palestine belongs to the Jews because there are multiple passages in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament which attest that God specifically gave this land to Abraham and his descendants. The Jews and Christians who believe that this land belongs to the Jews point to a very large number of passages in the Hebrew Bible which they believe make explicit the fact, in their minds, that Israel/Palestine belongs to the Jews. These passages include, for example, Genesis 12:1–3 where God promises Israel/Palestine to Abram (who was later renamed Abraham), Exodus 3:7–22 where God tells Moses that he must lead the Israelite people out of Egypt and into Israel/Palestine, parts of the book of Deuteronomy and the book of Joshua where God explicitly and implicitly gives the Israelite leader Joshua and his armies the divine command to kill the Israelites' enemies and conquer the land for themselves (e.g., Deuteronomy 20:10–20), and 2 Samuel 7:1–7 where God reaffirms his promise of Israel/Palestine to the Israelite people by promising the land to the Israelite King David and his descendants.¹

For their part, Muslims have at least three reasons for believing that the land of Israel/Palestine belongs to them. First, according to one story within the Islamic tradition, Muslims believe that while Muhammad was sleeping one night at the Kaba in Mecca, he was taken on a night journey to Jerusalem

where he was lifted to seven levels of heaven above the Dome of the Rock Mosque in Jerusalem and met seven prophetic figures (Adam, John, Jesus, Joseph, Idris, Aaron, and Moses) all of whom, according to Muslims' interpretation, explicitly or implicitly affirmed Muhammad's role as the final or the seal of the prophets.² Indeed, what Muslims believe to be Muhammad's footprint is on public display at the Dome of the Rock Mosque.³ Second, Muslims believe that the armies of Umar, who was Sunni Islam's second caliph and whose armies Muslims believe were blessed by God, conquered Jerusalem in the seventh century and this city, which is the third holiest to Muslims after Mecca and Medina, remained under the control of Muslim regimes until the twentieth century, all of which, in their view, was God's will.⁴ Third, Muslims believe that the Muslims' largely successful defense of Jerusalem and Israel/Palestine during the Crusades, which in the Near East lasted from the late eleventh century until 1291, came as a result of God's blessing and protecting Muslims from the invading Christians.⁵ Much as many Jews believe that it was through God's blessing that Israel/Palestine belongs to them, so too Muslims believe that it was through God's blessing that the land belongs to them.

An enormously significant event in the history of Judaism was the Roman Empire's military destruction of the Jews' Jerusalem temple in 70 CE. During this and subsequent periods, the Romans wrested much of the influence that the Jews had on Israel/Palestine, and their military conflicts with the Jews, including Bar Kochba's Revolt which took place between 132 and 135 CE, caused one of the most momentous Jewish dispersions in Jewish history. The Jewish diaspora that came into existence during this period, together with previous Jewish dispersions and exiles, created a situation where, apparently, only a very small number of Jews remained in Israel/Palestine, while the vast majority lived outside of that region.⁶ By the seventh century, Jerusalem came under Muslim control and at various periods during this approximately 1,900-year Jewish exile, at least some Jews had a desire to return to what they believed to be their homeland. This desire was frequently expressed, for example, during the annual Jewish Passover celebration where Jews uttered and still utter the phrase, "Next year in Jerusalem."⁷

The Origins of Modern Zionism

The roots of modern Zionism, which connotes the modern Jewish nationalist desire to create a Jewish state exclusively or primarily for Jews, are in nineteenth-century Russia, where anti-Semitism was extremely potent. While tragically there have been multiple pogroms or massacres against Jews throughout much of their history, the reigns of Russian Emperors Alexander III (1881–94) and Nicholas II (1894–1917) were characterized

by several pogroms which those emperors' governments tacitly encouraged.⁸ After the pogroms of the early 1880s, a variety of Jewish groups which had the goal of settling Jews in Israel/Palestine were brought under the organizational aegis of a coordinating body called the Lovers of Zion. During the 1880s and 1890s, the Lovers of Zion supported small farming settlements in Israel/Palestine, but these projects did not possess adequate funding and the settlements largely failed. In spite of the serious shortcomings of this movement, it has assumed a prominent place in the historical consciousness of modern Israelis and other Jews and is understood to be the first of several waves of settlement that contributed to the eventual creation of the state of Israel.⁹

In 1882, Leo Pinsker, a Russian-Polish physician, wrote the book *Auto-Emancipation*, which, among other things, stated that anti-Semitism was so deeply rooted in Europe that no matter what European countries' laws stipulated regarding the protection of Jews, Europeans would never treat Jews as equals.¹⁰ According to Pinsker, in order for Jews to end their continually oppressed status, they could not and should not wait for Western societies to change; they had to catalyze their own emancipation by establishing a fully autonomous Jewish state.¹¹ Pinsker focused more on the secular ideas of Jewish ethnicity and nationality than on Judaism as a religion and he did not believe that the new Jewish state necessarily had to exist in Israel/Palestine.¹² Pinsker's pronouncements were very attractive to a number of Russian Jews and in the 1890s several Zionist organizations emerged, each with its own proposals aimed toward combating the problems related to the persecution of Jews.¹³

Born in Budapest, Hungary, Theodor Herzl, a licensed attorney, journalist, playwright, and political activist, while not the founder of modern Zionism, attempted to unite the disparate Zionist organizations and ideologies in Europe into a coherent international movement. Through his experiences as a journalist, which gave him the opportunity to travel to different parts of Europe, Herzl reached the same conclusion about anti-Semitism as Pinsker – that anti-Semitism was so deeply rooted that laws could not abolish it.¹⁴ With these and related ideas, Herzl wrote *The Jewish State (Der Judenstaat)*, which was published in 1896 and provided the ideological principles for modern political and secular Zionism.¹⁵ Herzl stated that Jews were a nation of people who transcended the boundaries of conventional nation-states and lived in a variety of recognized countries with formal, nationalized political structures. However, this transnational Jewish nation did not yet possess a piece of land with boundaries, a government, a military, and the other characteristics that are typically associated with nations. The Jews had no state in which to manifest their existing national culture. For Herzl, the ongoing reality of Jewish national identity and the absence of a real Jewish nation-state combined to marginalize Jews in the formal nation-states in

which they lived and contributed to their oppression by the non-Jewish cultural majorities within those countries. In Herzl's view, the only resolution to these hardships that the Jews faced was for the Jews to obtain political autonomy in their own nation-state, thus emancipating their Jewish nationality from its oppressed condition. Like Pinsker, one of the most important foundations of Herzl's worldview was the idea that the Jews were bound primarily by their sense of secular political identity, more so than their religious one. In this vein, Herzl did not identify Israel/Palestine as the territory for a future Jewish nation-state.¹⁶

The Jewish State had a powerful impact on many European Jews and gave modern Zionism a clear and tangible political manifesto. Through Herzl's work, the first Zionist Congress took place in Basel, Switzerland in 1897. More than 200 people attended and it was a historic threshold event for Zionism. The members of the Congress agreed that the primary goal of Zionism was to establish a legally recognized home in Israel/Palestine for the Jews. The Congress also declared the establishment of the World Zionist Organization as the central organizational body of the Zionist movement. In addition, several integrally-related committees were formed to provide the movement with unity and direction.¹⁷ In the period after the Basel congress, branches of the central organization were created in many different parts of Eastern Europe and Zionists attempted to generate support among Jews and non-Jews for a Jewish state in Israel/Palestine. The Zionist Congress met every year after 1897 and, while attendees sometimes sharply disagreed on various subjects, Herzl's ability to attract ever-increasing numbers of participants added strength to his Zionist cause.¹⁸

Herzl tried to secure the support of Western European Jews, the United States government, and the Ottomans, and failed on each of these fronts. Many Western European and American Jews did not want to support Zionism because they thought that efforts to create a Jewish state and its establishment would potentially threaten their own citizenship in their home countries and catalyze increasing amounts of anti-Semitism where they lived. Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the leader of the Ottoman Empire, which included Israel/Palestine and vast areas of the Middle East, also opposed the possibility of European Jews settling anywhere in the Middle East because of the threat that it could eventually pose to Ottoman sovereignty and the possible conflicts that could arise between the Eastern European Jews and the indigenous Muslim and Christian populations in Israel/Palestine. The governments of most Western European countries saw no incentives in supporting the Zionist cause either. By the time of Theodor Herzl's death in 1904, he had provided Zionism with an organizational structure and the kind of momentum that survived his passing, but he had not garnered the backing of governments and other institutions that could have helped him fulfill his dream of the establishment of a Jewish state.¹⁹

Britain and the Zionist Movement

However, during and after World War I, the political status of Zionism improved considerably. During the course of World War I, several factors brought the question of Zionism before the British cabinet. The most urgent factor for members of the British government was their belief that Jewish groups in the United States and Russia had the ability to influence their respective governments' attitudes toward the war. Until the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, members of the British cabinet, some of whom were Zionists, held the deep concern that the German government – against which Britain was waging war with great vehemence and at enormous cost – would make a declaration supporting Zionist aims and thus Germany could gain enthusiastic support from American Jews. The members of the British cabinet feared that this support, which the American Jews would give to Germany, would then compel those Jews to work toward blocking the American alliance with Britain during World War I. This possibility horrified members of the British cabinet because they viewed American military and political support as absolutely essential in the British war effort against the Germans and other Axis powers.²⁰

Members of the British cabinet were also thoroughly committed to keeping the Russians in the war, as the Russians, the British, and their allies fought the Germans and the other Axis powers. By the autumn of 1917, largely because of the Bolshevik Revolution, which had succeeded in overthrowing Russia's czar and seizing control of Russia's government in October 1917, members of the British cabinet were concerned that Russia might withdraw or substantially reduce its commitment to the war effort. Some British government officials argued that a British gesture of goodwill toward Zionist aspirations might persuade influential Jewish members within the Bolshevik Revolution and the new Russian government to keep Russia in the war.²¹ The extent to which these British officials' ideas were well- or ill-founded is arguable. What is far more important is that these ideas existed and that they played a crucial role in influencing Britain's eventual, while often wavering and contradictory, mitigated support of Zionism.

Russian-born Chaim Weizmann, a Zionist spokesperson in London who was a chemistry professor and would eventually become Israel's first President, played an influential role in the formation of Britain's policy toward the Middle East. Weizmann, who was a guiding spirit within the World Zionist Organization and played a key role in establishing additional chapters of it, maintained strong relationships with members of the British cabinet and kept the topic of Zionism in the forefront of those officials' minds.²² One factor that assisted Weizmann in his Zionist endeavors was the fact that members of the British cabinet believed that Britain's support of Zionism could potentially

serve British imperial interests in a strategically essential part of the Middle East. British officials hoped that Britain's sponsorship of Jewish settlement in Israel/Palestine would require a British presence in that region and would thus block France from an area that was contiguous to the Suez Canal zone, which was economically, politically, and militarily vital to Britain.²³

Thus, four of the converging factors that interacted to cause Britain to produce a declaration in support of Zionist goals in Israel/Palestine were: (1) the British government's desire to strengthen its wartime alliances with the United States and Russia; (2) Weizmann's power to persuade and his unyielding lobbying efforts; (3) a sympathy among certain British cabinet members for Jews and the persecutions that they and their ancestors had endured over time; and (4) Britain's opportunity to advance its own strategic and colonialist interests in the Middle East. On November 2, 1917, Arthur James Balfour, Britain's foreign secretary, wrote a letter to Lord Rothschild, an influential and well-known figure among British Zionists, informing him that the British cabinet had approved the following declaration, which came to be known as the Balfour Declaration, in support of the Zionists' cause:

Foreign Office
November 2nd, 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours,
Arthur James Balfour²⁴

This monumental document would come to have an overwhelming and unstoppable effect on the Middle East, Muslim-Jewish relations, Arab-Jewish relations, and eventually significant parts of the world outside of the Middle East. Among other realities, the very statements that Britain would (a) support "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" and (b) "that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil

and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” proved to be, in and of themselves, utterly contradictory and were emblematic of the subsequent contradictions and vacillations in British policies toward the Jewish settlers and the indigenous Arab populations of Israel/Palestine. The area of Israel/Palestine that came to be known as the Palestine Mandate, which came under British military occupation in 1917, was not a distinctive administrative entity under the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans viewed that territory as part of southern Syria and it was divided between (1) the Ottoman province of Beirut; (2) the Ottoman province of Damascus; and (3) the Ottoman special administrative unit of Jerusalem. After the British captured Jerusalem in December 1917, they detached the territory of Israel/Palestine from Ottoman rule and placed Israel/Palestine under their own military occupation.²⁵ In 1920, the San Remo Conference confirmed the Balfour Declaration and Britain’s Palestine Mandate and put Britain into a position where it replaced its military government in Israel/Palestine with a civilian one.²⁶ In 1922, the recently established League of Nations gave its formal approval of Britain’s Palestine Mandate and added provisions that raised the expectations of Zionists while deeply frustrating many of the Arab residents of Israel/Palestine. In addition, the League of Nations’ pronouncement incorporated the Balfour Declaration and recognized Hebrew as an official language in Israel/Palestine.²⁷

Jewish Settlement of Israel/Palestine

These events opened the door to the immigration of mostly western Jews to Israel/Palestine. The Jews’ ensuing efforts to settle Israel/Palestine could be considered largely successful from a Zionist perspective and overwhelmingly infuriating from an Arab one. Between 1931 and 1946 the number of Jewish settlers in Israel/Palestine rose from approximately 174,000 to almost 600,000, while, during the same period, the Arab population in that region rose from approximately 865,000 to just over 1.3 million. More significantly, however, Arabs comprised 82 percent of the population of Israel/Palestine in 1931 and only 67 percent in 1946. During the same period, Jews comprised 16 percent of Israel/Palestine’s population in 1931 and 31 percent in 1946.²⁸

Jewish immigration and land acquisition were the main foci of Zionist efforts to establish a Jewish state. The Zionists’ goal was to increase the Jewish population of the mandate area through as much Jewish immigration as possible so that the Zionists could have, what they perceived to be, a tenable claim to a Jewish state in Israel/Palestine. In order to settle, house, and feed the Jewish immigrants, the Zionists found it necessary to acquire as much cultivatable land as they could. The Zionists’ commitment to maximum Jewish immigration and their efforts to acquire land were developments that

the Arabs of Israel/Palestine found deeply threatening. They began to believe that the western Zionists were acquiring and/or expropriating land that the Arabs believed rightfully belonged to them.²⁹

One of the organizations that played a crucial role in enabling Jews to settle in Israel/Palestine was the Jewish Agency, established in 1929, which was a reorganized version of the Palestine Zionist Executive which was created in 1921 by the World Zionist Organization. The Jewish Agency provided some of the services to the Jewish people that one would typically associate with a government, which included immigrant settlement, banking systems, and health care, among other things. The Jewish Agency played a key role in mobilizing Jews to come to Israel/Palestine, providing them with almost all of the services that they may have needed to settle in an utterly unfamiliar and foreign region, which, in most cases, was very far from the Jewish settlers' original homes. With the goal of maximizing the number of Jewish settlers in Israel/Palestine, the Jewish Agency worked in tandem with a variety of Zionist organizations including the Jewish National Fund, which purchased properties it looked upon as belonging to the Jewish people and then leased those properties to Jews at a very low rate.³⁰ Purchasing land from Arab owners who were absentee and others who were present in Israel/Palestine was one way that Zionists acquired property in the region. At various times in the history of Jewish settlement in Israel/Palestine, the Zionists also used violent force against the Arabs as a means of defending the properties that they had already purchased or taking other properties from the Arabs.³¹ Concomitantly, militant and frequently violent Jewish organizations such as the Irgun, Haganah, and the Stern Group (also known as Lehi) engaged in brutal and coercive tactics in their efforts to establish a Jewish state in Israel/Palestine.³² In response to a wide variety of Jewish tactics that were devoted to laying claims to land, the Arabs, at times through negotiations and at other times through violence, tried to defend their properties. In addition to using armed force to repel the settlers, the Arabs engaged in largely unsuccessful efforts to persuade the British to restrict Jewish immigration and land transfers from Arabs to current and prospective Jewish settlers.³³

In the Palestinian Arabs' efforts to resist the Jewish settlements and the possible establishment of a Jewish state, they formed in 1932 an organization named Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabiyya fi Suriya al-Janubiyya (The Arab Independence in Southern Syria Party), which was devoted to creating an independent Palestinian state in Israel/Palestine, and another group with the name Youth Congress, which had a similar purpose.³⁴ In addition, on April 25, 1936, the Palestinians established an organization named the Arab Higher Committee which attempted to coordinate the efforts of a variety of Palestinian groups against the Israelis.³⁵ During the 1920s there were several Palestinian revolts and strikes directed against the Jewish settlements

and related British policies, including the Wailing Wall Disturbances in 1929, a general strike in 1936, and a large revolt in 1937.³⁶

The Irgun consisted of a group of Zionists who advocated a policy of violent action against Palestinians and British personnel who worked in Israel/Palestine and executed a series of violent acts against those groups, such as the destruction of a wing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946, for the purpose of establishing a Jewish state.³⁷ While Haganah perpetrated its own acts of violence against groups that it considered to be enemies of a future Jewish state, Haganah also engaged in numerous acts of sabotage. Following a similar strategy, the Stern Group assassinated Walter Edward Guinness, first Baron Moyne, who, among many other positions, held that of Britain's Minister Resident in the Middle East when he was killed in 1947.³⁸ These and a number of other factors, which were contributing to disorder in Israel/Palestine, led Britain's Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin to refer the entire matter of Israel/Palestine's status to the United Nations in February 1947.³⁹ Through a vote of the General Assembly that took place on November 29, 1947, the United Nations approved the partition of Israel/Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states and accorded international status to Jerusalem.⁴⁰ In stark opposition to the recommendations of the United States' Defense and State Departments, whose officials wanted to maintain strong relationships with the emerging Arab states, the American President Harry S. Truman lobbied very hard in favor of the passage of this resolution which eventually led to the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel. As Charles D. Smith has written, "Whatever the nature of the Zionist accomplishment in Palestine, the victory at the United Nations was essentially won in the United States."⁴¹

The United States' policy toward the Jewish settlers and the establishment of the state of Israel would come to have a largely negative impact on the United States' relationship with many other Middle Eastern countries and majority-Muslim countries outside of the Middle East during the years ahead. In the wake of this resolution's passage, fierce battles raged between Jews and Palestinians in Israel/Palestine. On May 14, 1948, General Alan Cunningham, the last British High Commissioner in Israel/Palestine, departed from there and a few hours after his departure, David Ben Gurion, who was to become the Jewish state of Israel's first Prime Minister and Defense Minister, declared Israel's independence.⁴² One day later, on May 15, 1948, units from the armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan (later to be called Jordan), and Iraq invaded Israel, beginning a regional war which, among other things, resulted in the defeat of those Arab forces as well as the enlargement of Israeli territory.⁴³ During this period, more than 700,000 Palestinians became refugees.⁴⁴

Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization

While a number of Palestinian groups have arisen during the period since Israel's independence in 1948, the most important in the history of Palestinian resistance are Fatah (which was founded in the late 1950s and early 1960s), the Palestine Liberation Organization (which was founded in 1964), and Hamas (which was founded in 1987).⁴⁵ While Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) are primarily secular, Hamas is exclusively Islamist in its orientation.⁴⁶

Fatah, which is the palindromic acronym for "Harakat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyya" (the Palestinian Liberation Movement), was established in the late 1950s and early 1960s, through the integration of various Palestinian nationalist organizations already active in refugee camps in the Middle East (where many Palestinians had been forced to go after having fled or been expelled from Israel after its founding) and in diaspora groupings of Palestinian students in different parts of the region.⁴⁷ One of the organizers involved in the creation of Fatah was Yasir Arafat, who was to become the leader of Fatah until 2004, the Chairman of the PLO (a position he would hold from 1969 until 2004), and the President of the Palestinian National Authority (an office he would occupy from 1996 until 2004).⁴⁸

Arafat was born Abdel-Rahman Abdel-Raouf Arafat al-Qudwa al-Husseini in December 1929.⁴⁹ While Arafat claims Jerusalem as his spiritual home (because Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem who provided much of the leadership for the Palestinian nationalist movement from early in the twentieth century until 1948, was a relative of Arafat's on Arafat's mother's side), it is not known with certainty whether Arafat was born there or in Gaza or Cairo, Egypt.⁵⁰ During Arafat's childhood, he saw Israel/Palestine convulsed by the revolts which had been engendered by the immigration of Jewish settlers into the country, and the resistance of the indigenous Palestinian Arabs against those settlers.⁵¹ Arafat played an active role in the struggle against the Zionists.⁵² After the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, he left Palestine to study at the University of Cairo, where some of the core members of the organization which was to become Fatah were members of the Palestinian Students' Union in Cairo. These men were to form the main leadership of Fatah at the time of the movement's foundation in the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁵³

Al-Fatah appointed a special committee in 1958 to draft its guiding principles. The summary of the draft is as follows:

- 1 Revolutionary violence is the only means of liberating the homeland.
- 2 This violence must be exerted by the masses.

- 3 The object of this revolutionary violence is to liquidate the political, economic, and military institutions of Zionism over the whole of the territory of Palestine under Israeli control.
- 4 This revolutionary action should be independent of all party or state control.
- 5 This revolutionary struggle will of necessity continue over a long period.
- 6 It is an Arab revolution spearheaded by the Palestinians.⁵⁴

This statement played a significant role in guiding Fatah, and subsequently the PLO, for much of the lives of these organizations and continues to do so in some measure today. Also, the secular notions of “revolutionary struggle” and “state control” are quite evident in this Fatah declaration. Unlike declarations that would be issued by Hamas during that organization’s founding in the late 1980s and for the rest of its history, there are no references to Islamic principles in this early Fatah statement.⁵⁵ Although, after the writing of this document, some members of Fatah dispersed to various countries and regions in the Middle East, the group’s basic ideology and Fatah’s members’ commitment to resisting Israel and creating a Palestinian state remained durable. The members of Fatah established a Central Committee, which was to be the locus of the group’s day-to-day power.⁵⁶ The members of the Central Committee stated that there should be regular meetings of a Fatah General Conference, which would represent the group’s leadership and rank-and-file membership. However, by early 1983 only four conferences had been held, with a gap of nine years between the third conference in 1971 and the fourth one in May 1980.⁵⁷

After Fatah’s founding in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the next major event that had an eventual impact on Fatah’s history, structure, and direction was the establishment of the PLO in 1964. The PLO was established by the member nations of the Arab League as a hoped-for umbrella organization for Palestinian resistance movements; one could argue that the fact that several Arab states were involved in establishing it meant that they were attempting to use the PLO as one way to exert their own influence on the Palestinians and on Israel in the midst of the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict.⁵⁸ The first leader of the PLO was Lebanese-born Ahmad Shuqayri, who was born in 1908 and returned to his family’s home in Acre, Palestine (now Akko, Israel) when he was 8 years old. After graduating from the American University of Beirut in Lebanon and the Jerusalem Law School, he practiced law for several years and became involved in the Palestinian nationalist movement. He departed from Israel/Palestine following the unsuccessful Palestinian Revolts between 1936 and 1939. He returned in the late 1940s during which time he held several positions in the Palestinian civil administration. Shuqayri fled the fighting of the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 and later worked for the Arab League.⁵⁹

The Fatah leaders more or less ignored the establishment of the PLO. They were concentrating instead on continuing their armed struggle against Israel. However, the June War in 1967 (which is also called the Six-Day War and took place between Israel on one side and forces from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, on the other) played a pivotal role in Middle East politics as a whole and in Fatah's relationship with the PLO. During that war, Israel conquered East Jerusalem (whose population was predominantly Palestinian because the Jews had fled or been expelled from there in 1947), the West Bank of the Jordan River (which had been annexed by Jordan in 1950), the Sinai Desert and Sinai Peninsula (which had been under Egyptian control beginning in 1949), and the Golan Heights (which had been part of Syria), among other areas.⁶⁰ By 1968, in the aftermath of the Arab states' defeat in the June War, Fatah and a coalition of other Palestinian groups which had emulated it in the guerrilla field were strong enough to take control of the PLO's apparatus. Yasir Arafat, whose leadership had been crucial to Fatah, was elected Chairman of the PLO's Executive Committee, and it was during that period that Shuqayri was forced to leave the leadership of the PLO.⁶¹

In the years after 1968, Fatah strengthened its hold on all parts of the PLO apparatus. The merger of Fatah and the PLO was one of the most significant events in the PLO's history in that it helped give the organization increased energy, cohesion, and direction.⁶² As formulated in May 1964, the Palestinian National Charter vested supreme power for determining PLO policy in the Palestinian National Council (PNC), which has acted during various times in Palestinian history as a Palestinian Parliament-in-Exile.⁶³ The Constitution had stated that PNC members should be elected by the Palestinian people. However, in practice that was impossible, largely because of the oppressed condition in which the Palestinians found themselves (under Jordan and Egypt during periods before 1967 and under Israel after 1967), the fact that the leadership of the Palestinians was often in exile, and communication between various Palestinian leaders as well as the rank-and-file was often difficult.⁶⁴ The precepts governing the Constitution of the PLO are fully secular in nature insofar as Palestinians, regardless of their religious preference, may vote in or be elected to the Palestinian National Assembly.⁶⁵

The Palestinian National Charter is one of the most important documents of the PLO. It contains the organization's most significant principles, its central arguments, its goals, and a description of its strategy to achieve these goals. The ideas that the Charter describes are frequently echoed in Palestinian publications, debates, and other forms of Palestinian discourse. Thus, the Palestinian Charter serves as an excellent introduction to PLO thinking.⁶⁶

Historically, the Charter preceded the establishment of the PLO. In some respects, the Charter helped catalyze the Palestine Liberation Organization,

since it functioned as the template according to which the PLO was formed.⁶⁷ About three months before the organization was created in mid-1964, Ahmad Shuqayri formulated and published a draft of the Palestinian National Charter as a way of introducing the organization that he planned to create, to explain its nature to the Palestinians, and to obtain the consent of the Arab states to its establishment.⁶⁸ Because the governments of the Arab countries of the Middle East wanted to maintain a level of control over the Palestinian resistance movement, partly so that the movement would not cause political disruptions in their own countries, the leaders of those governments attempted to maintain a close watch over the PLO and other resistance movements that had emerged among the Palestinians. In any case, the Palestinian National Charter was more than a mere platform or a summation of political views. It held, in the eyes of many Palestinians and their supporters, the relatively high status that is usually attributed to constitutions of nation-states with respect to its authority and the high bar that had to be overcome in order to amend it.⁶⁹

The Palestinian National Charter is a product of the secular thinking which predominated in the time surrounding its creation. That is, virtually every Arab state that was in existence at the time, except for Saudi Arabia, possessed laws and constitutions which were largely secular in nature. The Palestinian National Charter was influenced by and manifested those aspects of its political environment. For example, except for Article 15 which states that the liberation of Palestine will safeguard the Holy Places for the free worship of all people, there is very little mention of religion in the entire document. Each of the six declarations in the Introduction begins with the phrase, "We, the Palestinian Arab people," which sets the tone for the secular nature of the document. Instead of basing its authority on the Quran, as the Hamas Charter, which would be written well over 20 years later, does, the Palestinian National Charter finds authority for its position in secular notions of human rights, such as those recognized by international covenants and common practices including the charter of the United Nations.⁷⁰ The introduction and the body of the Charter also frequently assert the secular notion of Arabism, an idea which is not found in the Hamas Charter.

Article 1 of the Palestinian National Charter is representative of the predominance of secular concepts in that document. Article 1 is one of the most important articles of the Charter and, in some respects, expresses some of the essential principles underlying Palestinian nationalism while also expressing the Palestinians' integral connections with non-Palestinian Arabs.⁷¹ This article states, "Palestine is the homeland of the Arab Palestinian people; it is an indivisible part of the greater Arab homeland, and the Palestinian people are an integral part of the Arab nation."⁷² This article presents three secular connections or links: (1) a connection between a

people and its country, that is, between the Palestinian people and Palestine as its homeland; (2) a territorial connection between the territory of Palestine and the Arab homeland; and (3) an ethnic connection between the Palestinian people and the Arab nation.⁷³ These links are stated in largely secular terms. The secular nature of the document even resounds in the ideals that the Charter ascribes to the Palestinian people. Article 24 states, "The Palestinian people believe in the principles of justice, freedom, sovereignty, self-determination, human dignity, and the right of peoples to exercise them."⁷⁴ These notions are drawn much more from Western secular notions than they are from Quranic ones.

While secularism lies at the foundations of the Palestinian National Charter and the PLO, members of the PLO have often used Islamic and other religious ideas to motivate the Palestinian resistance. For example, Yasir Arafat frequently utilized Quranic imagery to inspire the Palestinians. In a speech which he gave in December 1987, for instance, he compared the struggle that the Palestinians faced with that of Muhammad's first battle against the Quraysh, the Battle of Badr near Medina in 624, when, according to Arafat and many Muslims, the Prophet with only 300 inexperienced men defeated the vastly superior Meccan force of 1,000 men. Through this and other narratives drawn from Islamic history, Arafat and other PLO leaders have attempted to motivate Palestinians to fight against the Israelis for their liberation.⁷⁵

After Israel's success in the June War in 1967 and after it began to occupy the West Bank, among other areas, the PLO and affiliated Palestinian resistance groups, such as the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which had a strong Marxist foundation to its ideology, moved their operations to Jordan. These and other Palestinian groups used Jordan as an operational base for their militant actions against Israel's occupation of the West Bank. One immediate goal of these groups was to liberate the West Bank and Gaza of Israeli occupation and, as some Palestinians hoped, to liquidate Israel completely. These resistance organizations were operating almost completely outside of the control of Jordan's King Hussein.

The violent militant actions of these Palestinian groups reached a dramatic point in September 1970 when the PFLP hijacked three civilian airliners and landed two of them in a desert area in Jordan which the Palestinians declared "liberated territory," meaning, in their view, that area of Jordan belonged to the Palestinians. They landed the third civilian airplane in Cairo, Egypt. The members of the PFLP announced that the passengers of the planes would be freed only if PFLP members who had been imprisoned in Europe and Israel were released within 72 hours. The PFLP stated that if their demand was not met, the more than 300 passengers, many of them Americans, would be killed as the PFLP hijackers detonated the explosives with which they had wired the planes. By September 12, the hijackers'

demands had not been met and they detonated the explosives attached to the planes without killing any of the passengers. These events caused a major uprising on the part of the Palestinians against the Jordanian government and this violent uprising came to an end with the signing of a 14-point accord between King Hussein and Yasir Arafat on September 27, 1970.⁷⁶

After these events, Yasir Arafat and the PLO moved their operations to Lebanon, which they used as a base of operations for attacks against Israel, which eventually invaded Lebanon in June 1982 with the hope of quashing the PLO and killing Yasir Arafat. (This became a three-month-long war and the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon lasted until 2000.)⁷⁷ While the PLO was somewhat weakened as a result of the Israeli attack, which began in June 1982, Arafat left Beirut for Tunis in late August 1982, which gave the PLO an opportunity to regroup.⁷⁸

Israel's Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza: 1967 and Beyond

In terms of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, from approximately the time that the occupation began in 1967 until 1977 (a period that was strongly influenced by the power of a liberal Labor Party-dominated government which held sway), some Israeli government leaders, such as Moshe Dayan (who served as Defense Minister in Labor-led Israeli governments through much of the 1970s), hoped that the occupation would be characterized by three principles: (1) non-presence, which involved minimizing visible signs of the Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza in order to lessen potential conflict with the Palestinians; (2) non-interference, which involved placing responsibility for economic and administrative activities in Arab hands; and (3) open bridges, which involved renewing personal and economic contacts between the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza, on the one hand, and people in Arab countries, on the other.⁷⁹ With this three-pronged policy in mind, Moshe Dayan and others in the Israeli government hoped that positive economic, social, and political conditions for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza (as well as a hoped-for integration of the Israeli, West Bank and Gaza economies into the wider Arab world) would lessen Palestinian resentment against Israel and thus decrease the potential influence of Palestinian resistance organizations. Yet, these three principles must be viewed with circumspection; in characterizing these stated goals, Joost Hiltermann observes, "To Palestinians, who have suffered ... under a ruthless and ubiquitous military occupation these proclaimed objectives of 'non-presence,' 'non-interference,' and 'open bridges' must sound like a poor joke."⁸⁰

Indeed, in spite of this three-pronged policy, the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza endured harsh conditions under Israel's military occupation, which included: (1) restrictive curfews; (2) virtually no political or administrative rights; (3) living under constant Israeli surveillance; (4) requirements that Palestinians gain licenses from the Israelis for virtually every activity including travel to see family members; (5) living under Israeli military orders that the Palestinians could not appeal in any way; (6) far inferior housing, educational, employment, and other opportunities for Palestinians vis-à-vis Israelis; (7) the forcible exile of tens of thousands of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza; (8) heavy restrictions on Palestinian freedom of speech and severe punishment for any criticism of the Israeli government; and (9) the demolishing and sealing of more than 1,200 Palestinian homes between 1967 and 1978.⁸¹

The election of the conservative Likud Party leader Menachem Begin as Israel's Prime Minister in 1977 (with the subsequent appointment of Moshe Dayan as his Foreign Minister) made the difficult conditions under which Palestinians lived even worse. The policy of Begin and his Likud Party included the following goals: (1) to acquire control of as much of the land and resources in the West Bank and Gaza as possible; (2) to establish an overwhelming Jewish presence in the West Bank and Gaza through settlements in those majority-Palestinian areas and to build infrastructures of legal and support services for them; (3) to restrict virtually every form of Palestinian development; (4) to eventually fragment Palestinian population areas while connecting the areas of Jewish settlements; and (5) to gain ownership of properties that Palestinians owned through a variety of means including legal processes that enabled the Israeli government to seize properties that Palestinians owned but had not registered.⁸²

These conditions and other factors contributed to the increased militancy of various Palestinian youths beginning in the early 1980s. There were at least five additional reasons for the increase in militancy among Palestinian youths during this period. First, a sharp downturn in the Israeli and Palestinian economies had a negative impact on Palestinian youths in numerous ways, including the fact that many lost their jobs and could not find new ones. Second, the increasing brutality of the occupation meant that Israeli soldiers were stopping, searching, detaining, arresting, and humiliating Palestinians. Third, Palestinian youths were growing increasingly frustrated with the older generation of Palestinians for their failure to improve the Palestinians' situation. Related to this factor was the fact that during the PLO leadership's periods of exile in Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia, that organization became increasingly separated and alienated from the Palestinians who were suffering in the West Bank and Gaza.⁸³ Fourth, Palestinians were required to pay taxes to Israel, which was aggravating to Palestinians because, in addition to placing a heavy burden on them,

it was funding the very occupation that was making their lives so difficult.⁸⁴ Fifth, the policy of continually increasing Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza and the consistent expropriation of Palestinian land stoked Palestinians' anger. For example, when Menachem Begin took office as Israel's Prime Minister in 1977 there were 24 settlements inhabited by 3,200 persons. When Begin resigned in 1983, the number of settlements had increased to 106 and the number of settlers to 28,400.⁸⁵ As a part of the settlement activity, the Israeli government supervised two separate road systems in the West Bank: one safer, efficient, and well-maintained road system, which was for the primary use of Israeli Jews, and another dangerous, shabbily maintained road system with high accident rates which had multiple checkpoints and was continually patrolled by Israeli soldiers, which existed for the Palestinians. Many Israelis maintain that these separate road systems were established in order to lessen the likelihood of Palestinian attacks against Israelis and to connect Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem, while many Palestinians maintain that these separate road systems were established to expand the influence of Israelis in the West Bank.⁸⁶

Within this context, in 1981, a cycle of violence began with Palestinian youths engaging in physical resistance against Israeli soldiers in occupied areas.⁸⁷ Palestinian high school students became increasingly active in strikes, boycotts, and public demonstrations opposing the Israeli occupation, while there was an increase in rock-throwing incidents. Palestinians increasingly performed these activities in broad daylight and seemed to be "undeterred by the consequences of their actions."⁸⁸

The First Palestinian Intifada, Hamas, and the PLO

These brewing antagonisms came to a head on December 9, 1987 after four Palestinians in Gaza had been killed and seven others injured by an Israeli vehicle the previous day.⁸⁹ From the perspective of many Palestinians, this event constituted the final straw and precipitated the first Palestinian intifada ("uprising" or "revolt") which began in 1987 and lasted until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. This intifada or resistance to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip took many forms, including Palestinians throwing rocks at Israeli soldiers and Israeli Defense Force (IDF) vehicles, public demonstrations, bombings directed against Israelis, shootings of Israelis, kidnappings, strikes, boycotts of Israeli goods, and a tax rebellion. During the initial weeks of the intifada, there were spontaneous mass protests. Over time, the United National Leadership of the Intifada (UNL), which came into existence as a result of a number of grassroots networks that had been operating long before the intifada, coordinated the

protests, while providing medical, schooling, and welfare services.⁹⁰ Through the frequent distribution of leaflets, the UNL informed the Palestinians of upcoming protests, attempted to motivate them in their struggle, and generally kept them informed of events related to the intifada.⁹¹ The UNL was comprised of professionals from several parts of Palestinian society including merchants, industrialists, physicians, engineers, and professors, for example.⁹² These individuals would then collect money from other people in their professions, who donated the proceeds of approximately one day's work per week to the UNL. The UNL would use a portion of those funds for its work and then distribute, usually through social workers, another, usually significant, portion of the money to others actively involved in the intifada as well as to the poor and needy.⁹³

One of the most important organizations to emerge around the time of the intifada is Hamas, an acronym for *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyah*, which loosely translated means Movement of Islamic Resistance. Hamas was founded as an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood. Through Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic movement, after several years in existence, was able to emerge in a significant way in the West Bank and Gaza.⁹⁴ Thus, Hamas, in addition to playing a key role in the intifada and posing a tangible challenge to Israel's occupation, through its Islamic ideology and organization also posed a challenge to the PLO and other secular Palestinian organizations.⁹⁵ Since Hamas formed as an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been operating previously in Egypt and later among the Palestinians, some background on the history of the Muslim Brotherhood among the Palestinians would be helpful.

The Muslim Brotherhood's link with the Palestinians began in 1935, when Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, sent his brother 'Abd al-Rahman al-Banna to establish contacts there.⁹⁶ The group's membership grew steadily during the 1940s and 1950s. Throughout most of its existence among the Palestinians, the Brotherhood was primarily religious and social in nature. In the years following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza beginning in 1967, the Brotherhood among the Palestinians continued to concentrate mainly on what it described as the raising of a Muslim generation through the establishment and fostering of Islamic schools, social service organizations, and Muslim social clubs, for example.⁹⁷

During the 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood among the Palestinians was strengthened by the efforts of the dynamic preacher and co-founder of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, who founded al-Mujamma (the Islamic Center) which provided the impetus for the merger of the Muslim Brotherhood Societies in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jordan into a single organization called "The Muslim Brotherhood Society in Jordan and Palestine."⁹⁸ This reorganization affected the position and policies of the Brotherhood in the occupied

territories by bringing guidance, instruction, and support from the society and its leadership based in Jordan.

The Muslim Brotherhood spread its ideas and rallied support for the Islamic movement in several different ways. It established libraries, sports and social clubs; it also used zakat (the obligatory annual contribution by Muslims of 2.5 percent of all of their wealth) to help thousands of needy families. The Brotherhood founded and administered nursery schools, kindergartens, and primary and secondary schools, while extending loans to students in Palestinian and Arab universities.⁹⁹

Mosques in the West Bank and Gaza were one of the Muslim Brotherhood's most effective tools in spreading its influence, particularly in the period following the Israeli occupation. Hence, in the time between 1967 and 1987, the number of mosques in the West Bank rose from 400 to 750 and in the Gaza Strip from 200 to 600. After daily afternoon prayers and sunset prayers, the Muslim Brotherhood was able to use mosques – as areas that were usually not subject to interference from the Israeli government or military – for religious and political work and for recruiting members.¹⁰⁰ However, despite the Brotherhood's growth and effectiveness in gathering support through its social services and activities, a certain amount of dissatisfaction toward the organization grew among the Palestinians because of the Brotherhood's hesitance in directly resisting the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁰¹

On December 9, 1987, the day after the four Palestinians had been killed in Gaza and seven others injured, leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza met to discuss ways of utilizing the event to arouse Islamic and Palestinian nationalist sentiments and assure the spread of wide public demonstrations against the occupation.¹⁰² The first meeting of Hamas was held at the house of Ahmad Yasin, the founder of the Islamic Center, and was attended by other prominent leaders of the Center: Dr 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Rantisi (a physician); Dr Ibrahim al-Yazuri (a pharmacist); Sheikh Salih Shihada (an instructor at the Islamic University); 'Issa al-Nashshar (an engineer); Muhammad Sham'a (a teacher); and 'Abd al-Fattah Dukhan (a school principal).¹⁰³

The first leaflet that Hamas distributed, which was on December 14, 1987, was also the first to apply the term *intifada* to the revolt that was taking place.¹⁰⁴ Hamas's handbills had a predominantly Islamic content, including the depiction of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a religious struggle between Islam and Judaism.¹⁰⁵ According to Hamas, Palestine is only one area of conflict with the Jews but an arena of utmost importance which necessitated a physical jihad against the Israelis. Yasin stated that Palestine, in which the Jews and their allies stole lands that were eternally consecrated for the Muslims, is a holy land because it was site of the night journey of the Prophet Muhammad to heaven and of the Dome of the Rock Mosque,

the third holiest place in Islam. Moreover, Hamas states that the Jews have acted in highly questionable ways against Muslims and constitute a danger to the entire world. The Israelis treat the inhabitants of the occupied territories in a brutal manner, and during the seventh century Jews were the enemies of the Prophet Muhammad. The battles against Israel are, therefore, sacred battles and because of the sacredness of Jerusalem and Palestine to the Palestinians there is no room for compromise.¹⁰⁶ Hence, from the outset, as enunciated in its charter which was released in August 1988, Hamas defined itself and the struggle in which it was engaged against the Israelis in specifically Islamic terms.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, Hamas emerged in a context where many Palestinians were disillusioned with the secular Palestinian movements such as the PLO and with their failed efforts to liberate Palestinians from Israeli occupation. In addition, the Palestinians' support of Hamas was motivated by the search for psychological comfort, strength, and endurance which a religious ideology and movement can sometimes provide.¹⁰⁸ (At the same time, with the decline of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, Hamas was gaining strength around the same period that several other Islamist organizations in various parts of the world, such as the Taliban and al-Qaida, were becoming stronger.)

Yasin and Hamas offered the population a more appealing combination than that of the PLO and other secular groups. Islamist groups such as Hamas offer a special kind of activism that combines nationalism with calls to morality and social action. All of this is bound with the promise of divine grace. Sheikh Yasin offered the young Palestinians ideals and hopes that were far beyond the secularists' aspirations. In addition to the liberation of Palestine, Yasin and people like him reminded Palestinian Muslims of the heavenly rewards that awaited them if they had faith in God and lived their lives in accordance with the Sharia. Yasin also told Palestinians that Palestine belonged to the Palestinians and God would bless them in their struggles against the Israelis.¹⁰⁹ In line with this, there are members of Hamas who hope that the defeat of the Israelis at the hands of Muslims will be one important step toward the creation of a global Islamic state.¹¹⁰

Lilly Weissbrod describes the primary religious nature of Hamas and its objectives by maintaining that unlike the largely secular terminology of self-determination used by the PLO to justify its assertion for a Palestinian state, Hamas emphasizes religious Muslim rights to this land which was conquered in the era of the Rightly Guided Sunni Caliphs (with a special emphasis on the Caliph Umar who conquered Jerusalem in the seventh century), and which is therefore holy Muslim land and may not be held by non-Muslims.¹¹¹ According to Hamas's ideology, once Palestine is recovered, it is to be an Islamic state governed by Sharia. In line with this thinking, when Palestine (that is, the entire land between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan River) is liberated from the Israelis, it will not just be part of the Islamic community,

but a distinctly Palestinian Islamic state. The Hamas Charter and the leaflets that the organization distributed during the intifada enunciate these principles.¹¹² For Hamas, the appeal to join the struggle over Palestine is made to Palestinian Muslims for this is their own struggle for their and all Muslims' holy land. The land is owned by the entire Islamic community, but the original inhabitants – the Palestinians – have the right to retain its use, and as Muslims it is their obligation to do so.¹¹³ Thus, Hamas's worldview is similar to that of some other Islamist organizations in that Hamas views people and organizations who do not subscribe to its form of Islam as *jahil* or ignorant and potentially legitimate targets for its attacks. In sum, from Hamas's viewpoint, its ideas provide better justification for a struggle against the Israeli occupation than those of the PLO, for example, because its Islamic ideas appeal to core Islamic values rather than to alien Western and/or secular ones, such as self-determination.¹¹⁴

Hamas's Islamic ideology was translated into action in daily life during the intifada. Beginning around May 1989 Hamas drafted a precise mobilization calendar, which included the organization of general strikes, fasting, and specific days of confrontation against the Israelis.¹¹⁵ Hamas also gave instructions for the organization of the uprising in all aspects of daily life. For example, Hamas issued appeals to merchants and landlords not to raise their prices so that Palestinians could afford their goods and services, and exhortations to Palestinians who did collaborate or were considering collaborating with the Israelis to repent. Hamas also gave instructions to Palestinians to defend themselves against Israeli settlers and it gave Palestinians advice on security measures.¹¹⁶ Mosques in the West Bank and Gaza were natural places for Hamas's social structuring of the intifada. For example, during the intifada, Hamas instructed mosque committees to organize popular teaching sessions in order to compensate for the closure of schools and universities.¹¹⁷ By the end of the intifada, approximately 1,793 Palestinians had been killed, while approximately 189 Israelis were killed.¹¹⁸ While the intifada did not end Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, it may have created the environment for the establishment of the Oslo Accords.

The Oslo Peace Accords

The first intifada ended more or less in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords (which were partly founded on the momentum created by the Madrid Conference in 1991). The first set of Oslo Accords, which is often called Oslo I, to which Yasir Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin agreed, outlined a five-year plan for interim Palestinian autonomy which was divided into several phases, each of which granted the Palestinians increasing levels of administrative responsibility within the

majority-Palestinian areas of the West Bank and Gaza, as Israeli soldiers engaged in gradual withdrawals from those areas. Oslo I (1993) was not a peace treaty between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Rather, it was an interim peace agreement that some people hoped would eventually lead to a final peace settlement. The PLO accepted this interim agreement without any agreement in advance regarding the content of a final peace settlement. The Oslo I and later Oslo II (1995) agreements never made explicit mention of a Palestinian state.¹¹⁹ While the Palestinians had recognized Israel's right to exist, Israel recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians and agreed to negotiate with it.¹²⁰ (During this period, Arafat used the treaty of Hudaib, to which the Prophet Muhammad and his Meccan enemies agreed in 628 CE, as a precedent for negotiating with the Israelis.)¹²¹

According to the rules set forth in the Oslo Peace process, the interim negotiations between Israel and the PLO would conclude in 1998 with a permanent agreement based on United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.¹²² The Oslo I declaration delayed until a later date decisions regarding such important issues as the future status of largely-Arab East Jerusalem and the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, the status of Palestinian refugees and other Palestinians who lived outside of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, as well as circumstances related to Palestinian sovereignty.¹²³ Agreement on the Oslo I Accords led to the historic meeting and public handshake between Yasir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin on the White House lawn on September 13, 1993. The much more detailed Oslo II Accords (which were more than 350 pages long) set forth with much greater specificity than Oslo I the stages of Israel's military redeployment in the West Bank and the procedures by which power would be transferred to what became the Palestinian National Authority (the self-governing body of the Palestinians), together with several other issues.¹²⁴ Two of the most significant results of the Oslo Peace process were the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority, which the Israeli government stated it viewed as a legitimate partner in negotiations, and the creation of a set of mechanisms for regular elections among the Palestinians.¹²⁵

Over time, numerous problems led to the unsuccessful implementation of many aspects of the Oslo Accords. First, there was dissatisfaction among many Palestinians who were living in the West Bank and Gaza about the return of former PLO exiles who had been away for many years. Many Palestinians who had remained in the West Bank and Gaza resented the fact that these PLO exiles (who had not suffered under Israeli oppression for many years and were not in the majority-Palestinian territories during the *intifada*) had returned to govern a people and an area with which these exiles had become unfamiliar. Second, some of the Palestinians who had lived in the West Bank and Gaza believed that Yasir Arafat's PLO was very

corrupt and only concerned about its own interests. Third, after the Oslo Accords were signed, economic impoverishment in the West Bank and Gaza became much more severe. This impoverishment was caused in part by the Israelis sealing many Palestinian cities and towns (because of the Israelis' fear of militant Palestinian attacks), which led to many Palestinians being unable to reach their jobs in Israel proper or within the West Bank and Gaza. Fourth, after the Oslo Accords a large number of Palestinians were frustrated that:

- 1 A Palestinian state had not yet been created.
- 2 The Israelis were in control of much of Jerusalem.
- 3 Israel's brutal policies toward the Palestinians continued.
- 4 The Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza continued to expand in size and number in violation of United Nations Resolutions and other agreements.
- 5 There seemed to be almost no prospect of diaspora Palestinians returning to the West Bank and Gaza.
- 6 The Palestinians were forced to live in fragmented and isolated enclaves in the West Bank and Gaza.
- 7 The Palestinians' economic, educational, and political circumstances were far below those of most Israelis.¹²⁶

In the midst of these hardships, on February 25, 1994, Baruch Goldstein, an Israeli settler and major in the Israeli army, went on a killing spree in the West Bank town of Hebron's al-Ibrahimi Mosque killing 29 Palestinians who were at prayer.¹²⁷ Soon after that event, Hamas began, for the first time in its history, the practice of what it and other Islamists call martyrdom operations (which are also known as suicide attacks) for the purpose of resisting the Israeli occupation with the hope of eventually creating a Palestinian state.¹²⁸

There were also Israelis who felt deep dissatisfaction about the results of the Oslo Accords. While not all Israelis opposed the Accords, those who did frequently based their opposition to them on their interpretations of Judaism. Much like members of Hamas viewed their struggle in terms of certain aspects of Islam, some Jews viewed their struggle in terms of certain aspects of Judaism. For example, some Jewish leaders referred to all of Israel from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River as sacred land for the Jews and these assertions were based in part on their understanding that, according to the Hebrew Bible, God had promised that land to all their ancestors including such figures as Abraham, Moses, and David, among many others. Israelis, Jews, and Christians, who agreed with this line of thinking, believed that the potential surrender of all or part of the West Bank (which these individuals call "Judea and Samaria") and Gaza to the

Palestinians constituted a horrific violation of God's covenants with the Jewish people. In 1995, a group of rabbis placed what they believed to be God's imperative above the laws of Israel by issuing a decree instructing Israeli soldiers to resist orders to evacuate Israeli military bases in the West Bank.¹²⁹ As Hamas's martyrdom operations continued and as Israelis died as a result of them, Prime Minister Rabin came under increasing criticism for his leadership role in the Oslo Accords and he was assassinated by an Israeli named Yigal Amir on November 4, 1995. Amir maintained that his killing of Rabin was justified on the grounds that according to his understanding of Jewish law, any Jew who surrenders sacred lands to non-Jews should be punished by death.¹³⁰ The assassination of Rabin was a major setback for the peace process.

Hamas's martyrdom operations continued, as did the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. Peace efforts represented by the Wye River Accords (which came into being in 1998) and the Camp David II negotiations (which took place in 2000) yielded no meaningful results.¹³¹ With stark and visible tensions between Israelis and Palestinians continually bubbling to the surface, in September 2000 Ariel Sharon, who was the leader of Israel's conservative Likud Party, paid a very public visit to Jerusalem's holy site of Haram al-Sharif (as Muslims call it) and the Temple Mount (as Jews and Christians call it). This site is very sacred to Jews and Muslims. Sharon made this very public visit accompanied by a security force of 1,000 and a variety of news outlets in many parts of the world reported his visit. Sharon's stated purpose was to show that any Jew had the right to visit the holy site.¹³²

The Second Intifada

Palestinians were deeply insulted by Sharon's actions, regarded them as an insult to Islam, and launched a series of protests that included stone-throwing. Much like the killing of four Palestinians in Gaza by an Israeli vehicle in December 1987 brought to a head a multiplicity of simmering frustrations on the part of Palestinians, thus precipitating the first intifada, Sharon's visit brought to a head similar frustrations which precipitated this second intifada, which lasted until approximately 2005, although the ending date of the latter intifada is disputed.¹³³

During this second intifada, Palestinian youths threw stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli soldiers and military vehicles, while the Israelis responded with live ammunition. Three of the differences between the first and second intifadas were that during the second intifada participation was not as widespread among the Palestinians, no coordinated leadership body emerged, and the Palestinians used martyrdom operations and light

automatic weapons. For their part, the Israelis used weaponry that was much deadlier and more mechanized than during the first intifada. As the second intifada continued into 2002, the Israelis began to reoccupy portions of the West Bank and Gaza that they had given to the Palestinian National Authority earlier. Israel also imposed severe and far-reaching closures of the West Bank, which prohibited Palestinians in many cases from leaving their own neighborhoods and Israel closed most forms of internal commerce and business.¹³⁴ Between the fall of 2000 and the summer of 2003, approximately 2,400 Palestinians and 780 Israelis died in the second intifada.¹³⁵

Martyrdom Operations

One of the ways in which Muslims, such as members of Hamas, who engage in martyrdom operations justify their actions is the following. Many Muslims who engage in martyrdom operations view the seventh-century Muslims in and near Medina who fought against the non-Muslims (who sought to kill Muhammad and all other Muslims) as their model. According to Muslims who support martyrdom operations, much like many of those Muslims went into battle against the non-Muslims knowing or being fairly certain that they would die (largely because the Muslims were vastly outnumbered during those seventh-century battles) for the purpose of defending Islam from destruction, so too contemporary participants in martyrdom operations know that they will die for the purpose of defending Islam. In the case of Hamas, for example, at least some of the participants in those martyrdom operations believe that the Israelis have stolen land that rightfully belongs to Muslims, that they are attempting to destroy all Muslims and Islam, and that Muslims must defend themselves against that aggression. Thus, at least some of the participants in Hamas's martyrdom operations believe that they are dying for a higher cause – that is, defense of Muslim lands and the hope that Muslims will regain most or all of the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Thus, many members of Hamas and other Islamist organizations who engage in martyrdom operations do not view themselves as committing suicide (which, according to participants in martyrdom operations and other Muslims, Islam forbids); rather, many of these participants in martyrdom operations and their supporters see the participants in martyrdom operations as soldiers who are defending Islam, much like the Muslims who fought alongside Muhammad during the early seventh-century battles of Badr (624), Uhud (625), and Khandaq (627) were soldiers who justifiably engaged in armed combat to defend Islam and sometimes died in the process.¹³⁶

In 2005, in the midst of continuing martyrdom operations by Palestinians, under the leadership of Ariel Sharon the Israeli government evacuated all of

the Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip. At least some Palestinians viewed the withdrawal of the settlements as coming as a result of the Palestinians' resistance tactics including the tactic of martyrdom operations.¹³⁷ Even though Hamas won the Palestinian elections in 2006, through a long and complicated series of events Fatah came to govern the West Bank while Hamas came to govern Gaza. The prospects of a Palestinian state and for Israeli-Palestinian relations remain unclear, although in their own ways Hamas and Fatah hold considerable sway among Palestinians.¹³⁸

Palestine Worldwide

For some Muslims, the Palestinians' struggle against the Israelis, and by extension the Palestinians' resistance to the United States and other supporters of Israel, constitutes a microcosm of what they believe to be their own struggles against the injustices of various regimes in the majority-Muslim world and their frustrations with the West and Israel.¹³⁹ Television and radio stations, newspapers and magazines, websites, and other forms of media, to which many Muslims are exposed, carry information and images almost daily that show the enormously difficult circumstances under which the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza live.¹⁴⁰ While not minimizing the various specificities of the Palestinians' situation, one could conceptualize the Palestinian struggle in *monadic* terms; that is, as a kernel onto which is inscribed the ongoing history and struggles of some Muslims and even of non-Muslims who are struggling against injustice. Thus, the Palestinians' circumstances can be viewed as a *microcosm* of the ways in which some Muslims and non-Muslims may perceive their own struggles against injustice. This way of interpreting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict draws on the work of the twentieth-century intellectual Walter Benjamin who suggested that a single piece of art can be monadic (or microcosmic) in relation to the larger idea of Art in a similar way that an individual cell contains the genetic code for the entire body.¹⁴¹ In this vein, many Muslims and non-Muslims, who may be engaged in struggles against oppression, see their lives reflected in those of the Palestinians and the Palestinians' lives reflected in theirs. For example, some Islamists in Egypt who struggle against the government symbolically identify their resistance with that of the Palestinians; at the same time, the members of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the members of al-Qaida across the world symbolically identify themselves with the Palestinians and identify all of the Taliban's and al-Qaida's enemies with the United States and Israel.¹⁴²

There are also several cases outside of the majority-Muslim world where the Palestinians' resistance has been identified with groups who are

struggling against oppression, such as some members of the following groups: anti-apartheid activists in South Africa, Tibetans who are resisting the Chinese, and African-Americans who oppose prejudice in the United States.¹⁴³ Concomitant with these dynamics, the second Palestinian intifada prompted the emergence of the International Solidarity Movement and other groups who viewed themselves as committed to bringing their understandings of global solidarity to the Palestinians' resistance against the Israelis; these and some other groups have cooperated organizationally and some of them espouse the slogan, "We are all Palestinians."¹⁴⁴

At the same time, the Palestinians' protest continues to be a common theme at the World Social Forum and other meetings where the attendees view themselves as associated with what they understand to be international justice.¹⁴⁵ There are people in various parts of the world who believe that they have a stake in the Palestinians' cause and these people could be categorized under what Benjamin has termed "the tradition of the oppressed"; that is, different groups of people who view themselves as sharing certain similarities in light of the injustices that they believe are being perpetrated against them.¹⁴⁶ Scholars and activists such as Eqbal Ahmad (a late twentieth-century Pakistani writer, journalist, and anti-war activist), Barbara Harlow (who is the Louann and Larry Temple Centennial Professor in English Literature at the University of Texas at Austin and is affiliated with several departments and programs there), and Edward Said (a late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Palestinian-American literary theorist and advocate for Palestinian rights, who was a Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York City) have explained what they believe to be the similarities between the Palestinians' resistance and the political protests of other groups who view themselves as resisting injustice.¹⁴⁷

In a work first published in 1993, well before the second intifada and the global solidarity movement that arose in tandem with it, Said wrote presciently of that solidarity movement, stating there was "an elusive oppositional mood ... an internationalist counter-articulation" that was closely linked with "antisystemic movements" in various parts of the world.¹⁴⁸ Said believed that "the struggle of the Palestinian people" is "a byword for emancipation and enlightenment" for oppressed people in many parts of the world.

In the midst of these realities, the United States has adapted Israel's policies toward the Palestinians as one strategic and tactical model for its own battles against Islamist militants, as well as Iraqis and Afghans who oppose the United States' military activities in those countries. The United States' policies with respect to Iraq, for example, mirror, in some respects, the policies that various Israeli regimes have implemented

against the Palestinians. Such policies and practices include at least ten components:

- 1 The United States and Israeli governments' use of the term "terrorist" in reference to some of the entities that oppose them.¹⁴⁹
- 2 The United States Army implementing in Iraq some of the lessons that it had learned from the Israeli Defense Force's experiences in the West Bank and Gaza, with Israeli officers training American soldiers at Fort Bragg, North Carolina in targeted assassinations as one of several examples of this cooperation.¹⁵⁰
- 3 The use of joint United States-Iraqi military patrols in Iraq, which are similar to joint Israeli-Palestinian patrols that have been deployed in the occupied territories.¹⁵¹
- 4 The use of barricades, barbed wire, and checkpoints in certain parts of Iraq, which has the effect of controlling people's movements, and the use of similar mechanisms by Israel in the West Bank and formerly in Gaza.¹⁵²
- 5 The United States' use of Iraqi informants and Israel's use of Palestinian informants combined with the United States' and Israel's routine sharing of intelligence with respect to those countries' common enemies.¹⁵³
- 6 The United States' and Israel's attempted and/or successful garnering of natural resources in the targeted regions – with the extraction of oil in Iraq and of water in the West Bank being two salient examples.¹⁵⁴
- 7 The United States' and Israel's successful use of military air power and resulting air superiority – in the skies over Iraq in the case of the United States and in the skies over the occupied territories in the case of Israel.¹⁵⁵
- 8 The designation or perpetuation of ethnic, religious, and/or ideological divisions among the targeted populations, with the United States helping generate circumstances in Iraq where Kurds, Shiites, and Sunnis are acknowledged as political subgroups, and with Israel reinforcing ideological differences between Hamas and Fatah, with the purpose of seeking its own advantages as a result of these divisions.¹⁵⁶
- 9 The United States' and Israel's use of mass imprisonments of those governments' suspected enemies, with the United States government's mass arrests of 1,200 material witness "suspects" after the attacks on September 11, 2001, its use of the Guantanamo Bay prison camp, and the CIA's "black sites" for imprisonment, interrogation, and torture, similar to Israel's imprisonment, interrogation, and torture of large numbers of Palestinians.¹⁵⁷
- 10 The United States' and Israel's use of large-scale offensives against target populations, with, for example, the United States military's offensive in Fallujah, Iraq in November and December 2004, which

may have resulted in the death of as many as 6,000 Iraqis, and Israel's use of several military actions against Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and Lebanon, which resulted in large numbers of Palestinian deaths.¹⁵⁸

These similarities and others are elements of what some scholars have termed the Israelization of certain aspects of the United States' domestic and foreign policies.¹⁵⁹ This process of Israelization has involved, among other components, the United States adopting a set of approaches, particularly in its foreign policy, that are similar to Israel's, and members of the United States government, other Americans, and the United States' allies holding to the belief that the United States' and Israel's interests are virtually identical. One aspect of this approach is the idea that any threat to or attack on Israel is tantamount to a threat to or attack on the United States. Consistent with this line of thinking, the United States government has a tendency to treat any nation or group that seems to be an enemy of Israel as its own enemy.

Thus, the United States has viewed such groups and nations as Hamas, Hezbollah (a Shiite Islamist group which operates largely in Lebanon), Syria (during periods when it appears particularly anti-Israeli), Iraq under Saddam Hussein, and Iran as its own enemies even when in some of these cases it has been conceivable that some of these nations' and groups' interests could have coincided with those of the United States.¹⁶⁰ This tendency to support Israel has carried certain risks for the United States, such as an increased level of hostility against the United States on the part of certain Muslims and governments in the majority-Muslim world. Critics of the United States' policy have articulated its potential dangers, which include the United States having pursued Israel's foreign policy interests in ways that have been damaging in some cases to the United States' own.¹⁶¹ In any case, as the United States moves forward with its policies with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Middle East more broadly, and various majority-Muslim countries, it is confronted with a variety of peaceful diplomatic methods and approaches (including cooperative non-governmental efforts between private individuals and organizations in the West and their counterparts in the majority-Muslim world) which could be helpful as the United States and other Western countries attempt to bring political stability to various parts of those regions.¹⁶² At the same time, some observers have noted that there is a linkage between a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁶³ While for some Muslims and non-Muslims the circumstances which the Palestinians face epitomize other liberation struggles in some respects, on the practical level of the United States' foreign policy, the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle is inextricably linked to other wars and tensions inside and outside of the Middle East.¹⁶⁴

Notes

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- 11 *Ibid.*, 68.
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- 14 *Ibid.*
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- 18 Ernst Pawel, *The Labyrinth of Exile: A Life of Theodor Herzl* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux), 412–13.
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- 34 Mark A. Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 228.
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- 36 *Ibid.*, 257–9.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 262–3.
- 38 Cameron Hazlehurst and Christine Woodland with Sally Whitehead, eds., *A Guide to the Papers of British Cabinet Ministers, 1900–1964* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 169–70.
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- 55 See, for example, Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, eds., *Speaking Stones: Communiqués from the Intifada Underground* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 4–5, 216–18, 244, 257, 280, 287.
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Saudi Arabia

The Wahhabi movement, which began in Saudi Arabia during the eighteenth century, has had an enormous impact on the formation of the modern Saudi state, on Usama bin Laden who until 1994 was a Saudi citizen, and on a variety of Islamist groups including al-Qaida. This chapter will begin with a brief examination of the life and ideas of the founder of the Wahhabi movement, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–92), discuss his impact on the formation and perpetuation of the Saudi state and society, and then explore the impact of Wahhabi ideas and practices on Usama bin Laden and al-Qaida.

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the Wahhabi Movement

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was born in approximately 1703 in the town of al-Uyaynah in the Arabian region of Najd, which would be in central modern-day Saudi Arabia. There were several men in his ancestry and extended family who were respected Muslim jurists and legists.¹ Ibn Abd al-Wahhab may have memorized the Quran at a young age, perhaps when he was 10 years old.² He also studied the Hadith, interpretations of the Quran (*tafsir*), Islamic law and its interpretations (*fiqh*), and commentaries of various members of the ulema about Islam.³ Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's understanding of the Quran and Hadith had a significant role in shaping his position on the Islamic concept of *tawhid*, which refers to the oneness of God, and his background in those texts was one of the central principles in

his Islamic worldview.⁴ The notion of *tawhid* also played a crucial role in the worldviews of subsequent Wahhabi movements. Both Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the members of the Wahhabi movements maintained that falling short of *tawhid* in belief and/or practice could lead to chaos, immorality, greed, corruption, injustice, and the general deterioration of individuals and the societies within which they live.⁵ Conversely, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab believed that compliance with the principle of *tawhid* could lead to the establishment of morally upstanding, righteous, just, stable, and resilient societies.

He believed that *tawhid* was the central message of Islam for several reasons. First, the essential declaration which one must make in order to become a Muslim and which Muslims repeat throughout their lives, "There is no God but God and Muhammad is his Prophet," constitutes an absolute and unquestionable statement about God's oneness from a Muslim perspective. Second, according to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and other Muslims, during the seventh century the Quranic revelations which Muhammad received (together with his other teachings) vociferously criticized aspects of seventh-century Arabian polytheism, Judaism, and Christianity which seemed to contradict the strict ideas pertaining to God's oneness that Muhammad declared. According to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and many other Muslims, seventh-century polytheism contradicted Islam's declaration of God's oneness in the sense that during Muhammad's time Arabians may have worshipped 360 deities, physical representations of whom may have appeared in and around the Kaba, the large cubic structure in the middle of Mecca toward which Muslims face when they pray. According to the Quran and traditional Islamic interpretations of it, during Israelite history there were numerous occasions when the Israelites "lapsed" into idol-worship and thus contradicted God's oneness. For Muslims, idol-worship constitutes one of several reprehensible forms of violating God's oneness, in the sense that this form of worship constitutes an attempt either (a) to substitute a false God for God, or (b) to assign partners to God.

While Muslims know that Christians consider their religion monotheistic, Muslims believe that the Christian assertion about Jesus' humanity and divinity, together with the Christian belief in the trinity (i.e., the notion of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), seriously undermines the strict Muslim conception of God's oneness. Thus, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab believed that at one time or another in history, the Arabian polytheists, Jews, and Christians undermined *tawhid* and, as a result, either (a) allowed their own religions to be damaged by non-monotheistic beliefs, or (b) manifested very distorted notions of God and humans' relationship to him. According to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, there were times when adherents of these religions suffered chaos, immorality, greed, corruption, injustice, and general deterioration as a result of contradicting *tawhid*, and similarly negative consequences have befallen and will befall Muslims if they do not

adhere adamantly to the notion of *tawhid*. In this regard, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab believed that this message about Islam, which he believed was the true message of Islam, was both individual and societal in its character.

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab Spreads His Message

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab imparted these and related ideas beginning in his hometown of al-Uyaynah in the Najd province of Saudi Arabia. During the early stage, he spread his ideas through preaching, persuasion, and discussion.⁶ While the townspeople of al-Uyaynah certainly viewed themselves as Muslims, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab attempted to indicate to them practices which he believed contradicted Islam as he understood it. He criticized such beliefs and practices as people visiting tombs for the purpose of receiving blessings from the dead, requesting that spirits of the dead or other entities intercede during prayer, and the use of magic, sorcery, amulets, and talismans. At the same time, he promoted the study of the Quran and Hadith.⁷

As Ibn Abd al-Wahhab preached his message, local leaders in al-Uyaynah perceived his ideas, which opposed some prevailing beliefs and practices of his time, as a challenge to their political, religious, and moral authority. Since these leaders viewed Ibn Abd al-Wahhab as a threat to their bases of power, they made him feel unwelcome in al-Uyaynah and virtually forced him to go on pilgrimage to Mecca.⁸ After making this pilgrimage, he went to Medina where he studied with Najdi Sheikh Abd Allah ibn Ibrahim ibn Sayf and the Indian Sheikh, Muhammad Hayat al-Sindi. These two intellectuals had an impact on several of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's ideas, which included: (a) the significance of the Hadith in legal and moral decision-making; (b) concentrating on the *teachings* of the Hadith instead of the *chains of transmission* of the Hadith; (c) criticizing the blind imitation and memorization of past scholarship; (d) developing rigorous interpretations that seem to adhere strongly to the "real meanings" of the Quran and Hadith; and (e) the necessity of religious, societal, and ethical change in compliance with the "true teachings" of the Quran and Hadith.⁹ Such ideas appear in many of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's works.

After his time in Medina, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab went to the city of Basra in what is modern-day southern Iraq. During his time in Basra, he studied with the influential Muslim scholar Muhammad al-Majmu'i.¹⁰ Al-Majmu'i affirmed Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's ideas about *tawhid* and his opposition to *bid'a*, which is typically defined as new ideas or "innovations" which are contradictory to Islam's teachings.¹¹ As the leaders of Basra began to perceive Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings as potentially undermining their authority, they forcibly ejected him from the city.¹² After that, he traveled to other towns and cities before returning to Huraymila in the Arabian peninsula

where he preached and wrote one of his most influential publications, *Kitab al-Tawhid* (The Book of God's Oneness). This volume was distributed relatively widely in Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's home province of Najd.¹³

The responses which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab received to his message in Huraymila were mixed. On the one hand, two of the tribes in that city united with each other as a result of believing and practicing his message and used it as a basis for their union.¹⁴ On the other hand, a number of Huraymila's religious and political leaders were so angry about Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab's message opposing sex outside of marriage that a group of slaves (apparently under orders from at least one of their masters) attempted, unsuccessfully, to assassinate him.¹⁵

Then, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab returned to al-Uyaynah whose ruler at the time of his return was Uthman ibn Hamid ibn Muammar. After Ibn Muammar, in a sign of great hospitality and acceptance toward Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, offered his aunt's hand to him in marriage, these two men formed a religious and political alliance, where Ibn Muammar would offer Ibn Abd al-Wahhab protection as he spread his message and, in return, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab offered Ibn Muammar support in his desire to expand his rule within and outside of the province of Najd.¹⁶ After the two men agreed on the terms of this alliance, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab continued to preach his message actively.¹⁷ One of several reasons that this religious and political alliance was important was because it was an antecedent to the even more powerful alliance which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab would later form with Muhammad ibn Saud, which helped create the foundation for the modern Saudi state.

A Holy Tree, a Monument, and an Adulteress

During the period of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's alliance with Ibn Muammar three events took place, which many associate with Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and which, in some measure, played a role in defining the Wahhabi movement. These events were (a) the cutting down of a holy tree; (b) the demolition of monument which was associated with a burial site; and (c) the stoning of an adulteress.¹⁸

The chopping of the sacred tree took place soon after the alliance between Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Ibn Muammar was formed. During Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's life, there were several trees in al-Uyaynah upon which people hung various objects as a way of seeking the trees' blessings or intercession on their behalf. It is possible that this ritual may have been in some way related to pre-Islamic belief and practice.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab strongly opposed this intercessory tree-hanging ritual in that it violated the Islamic principle that only God had the power to bless people. At the same time, according to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Islam taught

that the use of intercessors was absolutely forbidden; he believed Islam taught that people could express their concerns directly to God without intercession of any kind. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab asked a number of his followers to cut down the trees and chopped the one that was the most venerated himself with the hope that his and his followers' actions would exhibit their deep-seated opposition to "superstitious" beliefs and practices, all of which, in their view, contradicted *tawhid*.¹⁹

The second well-known event that is associated with the period of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's alliance with Ibn Muammar was the demolition of the monument over the burial place of Zayd ibn al-Khattab (a companion of Muhammad and the brother of the second Sunni caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab). It is conceivable that this tomb, like those of some other well-known people in the majority-Muslim world, was the object of sincere veneration by many Muslims who came there to receive a blessing from God through Zayd ibn al-Khattab or his gravesite.²⁰ Tomb veneration was another ritual which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab viewed as directly contradicting the doctrine of *tawhid*, in that either the venerator sought the blessing of someone other than God (the dead individual or namely the gravesite) or the venerator was using the gravesite in a manner that contradicted Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's understanding of proper Islamic practice. In addition, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab believed that destruction of this burial monument (and others that were venerated by Muslims) was in full compliance with Muhammad's teachings and examples.²¹

Before Ibn Abd al-Wahhab destroyed Zayd ibn al-Khattab's tomb, he engaged in an extensive teaching and preaching mission where he explained his interpretation of Islam and what he interpreted as Islam's prohibitions against the veneration of tombs. In the face of stiff opposition from locals and with 600 of Ibn Muammar's soldiers protecting him, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab destroyed Zayd ibn al-Khattab's tomb, which was venerated by many locals and may have provided them with a source of revenue as a result of visits from out-of-town pilgrims. One of the reasons that the destruction of this tomb was important historically is because it set an example of tomb destruction for future Wahhabis and also visually demonstrated Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's opposition to any tomb veneration including the kind that was devoted to the tombs of Muslims, no matter how famous.²²

The third event that has played a defining role in the history of Wahhabism was the stoning of a woman during the life of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the events surrounding which seriously dismayed him.²³ According to this story, a woman came to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab stating that she had committed *zina*, which refers to sex outside of heterosexual marriage and is one of four offenses that are punishable by death according to the Hadith.²⁴ The Hadith states, "The Jew brought to the Prophet a man and a woman from amongst them who have committed illegal sexual intercourse (adultery). He ordered

both of them to be stoned (to death), near the place of offering the funeral prayers beside the mosque.”

In responding to this woman, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab told her to stop committing *zina'*, while encouraging her to seek forgiveness from God for her past behavior.²⁵ After this conversation, the woman continued to commit *zina'* on several occasions. After Ibn Abd al-Wahhab met the woman twice, admonishing her not to continue committing *zina'*, ordering investigations into her mental health, and providing her with several opportunities to stop engaging in these acts, he agreed with the local ulema's demands to stone her, in accordance with relevant stipulations in the Hadith.²⁶ For many Wahhabis, the chopping of the sacred tree, the destruction of the monument at Zayd ibn al-Khattab's tomb, and the stoning of the woman who committed *zina'* embody Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's commitment to Islam's absolute requirements about ritual purity and his willingness to put these beliefs into practice, sometimes in dramatic ways. Muslims who support Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings believe that these and other beliefs and practices which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab represented were fully consistent with Muhammad's own teachings, and comprise some of the essential teachings of Islam.

Opposition to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab

The ulema in al-Uyaynah began to become increasingly threatened by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's message and its popularity. They believed that he could seriously undermine their power base. In addition, al-Uyaynah's ulema resented both the fact that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab questioned the thoroughness of their knowledge of the Quran and Hadith, and that he placed so much emphasis on Muslims learning these texts.²⁷ The ulema's power rested partly on the fact that they had almost exclusive control over interpreting these texts. As Ibn Abd al-Wahhab taught people the Quran and Hadith, he empowered them to interpret these texts and this was one factor that posed a danger to the ulema's authority.²⁸ While Ibn Abd al-Wahhab disagreed with the ulema's desire to inhibit instruction in the Quran and Hadith and to maintain its almost exclusive interpretive control over those texts, he also pointedly criticized the individuals and communities who provided the ulema with financial support.²⁹

While Ibn Abd al-Wahhab probably had a significant number of followers during this period, his opposition to al-Uyaynah's ulema and its supporters engendered vehement opposition among his detractors.³⁰ In this context, one of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's enemies was a powerful tribal leader by the name of Sulayman Ibn Muhammad, who held considerable authority over Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's protector, Ibn Muammar. Sulayman Ibn Muhammad threatened Ibn Muammar with a potentially devastating financial penalty if

Ibn Muammar did not expel Ibn Abd al-Wahhab from al-Uyaynah and did not completely end his support of this Muslim leader.³¹ Ibn Muammar capitulated to Sulayman Ibn Muhammad's demands and ordered two horsemen to lead Ibn Abd al-Wahhab away from al-Uyaynah to the town of Dir'iyah.³²

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud

In Dir'iyah, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud, an important political leader in that city, forged a momentous and historic religious and political partnership which, after a series of events, eventually led to the formation of the modern state of Saudi Arabia.³³ After Muhammad ibn Saud's wife and two of his brothers received emissaries from Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, and accepted his message as a result of these conversations, Muhammad ibn Saud placed Ibn Abd al-Wahhab under his protection and then accepted the Muslim leader's message himself.³⁴ Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud made an agreement that as long as Muhammad ibn Saud complied with the principles of *tauhid* and the rest of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's message, he would support Muhammad ibn Saud's endeavors to bring the province of Najd and its environs under his control.³⁵ Thus, while Muhammad ibn Saud would provide Ibn Abd al-Wahhab with political, military, and financial support, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and his followers would attempt to offer Muhammad ibn Saud, his supporters, and the people he would conquer Islamically-based beliefs and practices that were truthful, clear, strident, and unyielding.³⁶ In 1744, these two men made a public declaration of their loyalty to God and to each other.³⁷ This agreement established the beginning of the first Saudi state which was to last from 1744 until 1818.³⁸

The Wahhabi Movement and the Origins of the Modern Saudi State

After the death of Muhammad ibn Saud, his son, Abd al-Aziz ibn Muhammad (1721–1803), who, together with his soldiers and allies continued to be equipped with Wahhabi ideas, continued to extend the power of the Saud lineage and Wahhabism by conquering the Arabian city of Riyadh in 1773 and making it their capital, and then conquering the Arabian cities of Kharj and Qasim by 1792, which was the year of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab's death.³⁹ By the time of his passing, his ideas had so permeated the thought and practice of the members of the Saud lineage and their military that Wahhabi ideas were the defining religious, political, and ideological dynamic behind the military and political expansion of the Saud family's influence.

As the Saudi-Wahhabi alliance continued its military, religious, and political expansion between 1802 and 1804, the soldiers in this allied force conquered the key cities of Ta'if, Mecca, and Medina in the western Arabian peninsula during that time period. Abd al-Aziz ibn Muhammad was murdered in 1803 at the age of 82. After his death, Saud ibn Abd al-Aziz (b. 1748), who was the great grandson of the original Saud who had established the Saud dynasty previously, became the leader of the Saud family's military.⁴⁰

During this early part of the nineteenth century, the house of Saud's military conducted raids into Iraq and Syria; the small number of these raids which succeeded resulted in only short-term occupations of some towns and cities in those regions.⁴¹ The house of Saud's military expanded its reach in the Arabian peninsula until Muhammad Ali (1769–1849), the Ottoman governor-general and ruler of Egypt, played a key role in the takeover of Mecca and Medina in 1812 and the destruction of this first Saudi state in 1818.⁴²

The Egyptians then became dominant political leaders of central and western Arabia and attempted to eliminate the influence of the Saudis and Wahhabis through violence and other means.⁴³ Through the aggressive actions of the Egyptians, the first Saudi state had been largely debilitated, with its military decimated and its administrative apparatus crushed.⁴⁴ After the first Saudi state came to an end, the peasants, merchants, and artisans of Najd longed for the periods of the first Saudi state (and the times preceding it) which they believed had brought relative peace and security.⁴⁵

The members of Najd's upper classes viewed the house of Saud as heroes because their successful battles had brought them valuable possessions, while the members of the Wahhabi ulema inside and outside of Najd encouraged people to remember the first Saudi state's accomplishments and their efforts in maintaining the strength and "truth" of Islam.⁴⁶ In addition to those groups' opposition to Ottoman-Egyptian rule, many residents of Najd endeavored to oust the rule of the foreigners and reestablish an environment which promoted stable economic, social, political, and religious life.⁴⁷ Toward this end, members of a resurgent Saudi-Wahhabi alliance based largely in Najd began in the early 1820s to engage in a series of virulent battles against the Ottoman-Egyptian rulers, which led to the fall of Riyadh in 1843 and a significant evacuation of the Ottoman Egyptians from various parts of the Arabian peninsula.⁴⁸ During the period of this second Saudi state, from 1843 until 1865, Faisal ibn Turki, the leader from the house of Saud during this period, brought many benefits to Najd including unity, a renewal of Wahhabi beliefs and practices, increased consolidation of Najd's tribes, a strengthened military, and relative stability, all of which helped maintain the Saudi lineage's leadership role in politics and kept Wahhabism's place in Arabian society vibrant.⁴⁹ This second state dissipated with Faisal ibn Turki's death in 1865.⁵⁰

Western Colonialist Countries and the Arabian Peninsula

After Faisal ibn Turki's death in 1865 a vitriolic power struggle between his sons, Abdallah, Saud, Muhammad, and Abd al-Rahman, ensued. From 1865 until the ascendance in the early twentieth century of Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Faisal al-Saud (1880–1953), hereafter referred to as Ibn Saud, the founder of the contemporary kingdom of Saudi Arabia, there were numerous battles in the Arabian peninsula involving Faisal ibn Turki's four sons, rival Arabian clans, and the Ottomans.⁵¹ During the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as fighting continued between various tribes of the Arabian peninsula, several countries attempted to gain influence in that region.⁵² Britain's prominence in and around Arabia was being challenged by Germany, France, and Russia. For example, Germany's government attempted to establish stronger links with the Ottomans in its effort to establish a rail line across Iraq to the Persian Gulf, which would avoid the sea-lanes that were controlled by the British.⁵³ By 1899, the Ottomans granted Germany the right to build a railway from Istanbul to Kuwait, which ran through Baghdad.⁵⁴ Without the knowledge of either the Germans or the Ottomans, Mubarak al-Sabah, the emir of Kuwait, who feared the possibility of the Ottomans seizing his territory, signed a secret treaty with Britain in 1896 which banned the Kuwaiti government from granting concessions to any country besides Britain, thus blocking Germany's desired train link to Kuwait's ports.⁵⁵ The British government, hoping to maintain and possibly increase its influence in the Arabian peninsula, formed its own alliances with Arabian tribes.⁵⁶

The French government, which also wanted to extend its influence and gain access to some of the Middle East's natural resources, developed plans to build a coaling station in Muscat, Oman, while Russia sought a warm-water port in the Persian Gulf.⁵⁷ Knowing that the Ottoman Empire, France, and Russia wanted to increase their influence in the Persian Gulf, Britain sent a large naval force to the Gulf in 1903, in an attempt to make a display of its desire to maintain its influence in the region.⁵⁸ Through these and other British efforts, most of the Arabian peninsula and Persian Gulf became part of Britain's colonial sphere of influence.

The Expansion of Ibn Saud's Influence

In the midst of such maneuverings by Western colonial powers, Ibn Saud and his allies conquered Riyadh in 1902, after some significant battles with warring Arabian tribes. This conquest and Ibn Saud's ongoing military and political successes in Najd constituted the beginning of the third Saudi state,

which currently exists.⁵⁹ As was the case with the two previous Saudi states, the Wahhabi tradition played a crucial role in the growth and consolidation of Ibn Saud's authority. One of the institutions which Ibn Saud used to extend his political and religious power in Najd and in other parts of the Arabian peninsula was the *mutawwa'a* (religious police). The *mutawwa'a* was comprised of men who were educated in Islamic rituals as well as the Quran, Hadith, and aspects of law. The *mutawwa'a* attempted to enforce obedience to Wahhabi Islam and the proper performance of related rituals.⁶⁰ The antecedents of the *mutawwa'a* may reach as far back as the fifteenth century of the common era.⁶¹

In 1902, the *mutawwa'a* and Ibn Saud made a *bay'a* or an oath of allegiance with each other.⁶² Consistent with this oath, between 1902 and 1932, Ibn Saud invested the *mutawwa'a* with prestige and funded them in return for their enforcement of Wahhabi principles and their assistance in extending Ibn Saud's power in the Najd and in other areas. In return for the *mutawwa'a*'s disciplining and punishing those who rejected Wahhabism and Ibn Saud's rule, he paid the *mutawwa'a* their salaries in cash and kind.

By rewarding the *mutawwa'a* materially and symbolically, Ibn Saud created a cadre of Wahhabi specialists, who enforced Wahhabi Islam and were loyal to Ibn Saud and dependent on his resources. In return, the *mutawwa'a* helped guarantee Ibn Saud the political and religious submission of the Arabian population under the aegis of obedience to God.⁶³ The *mutawwa'a* were expected "to flog all persons who were caught smoking, wearing fine adornment or procrastinating in their religious duties... . They were also responsible for the collection of *zakat* [mandatory financial donation] for the central government."⁶⁴ The enforcement of moral discipline and the collection of *zakat* through the work of the *mutawwa'a* were powerful instruments that helped consolidate Ibn Saud's rule.⁶⁵

As Ibn Saud extended his influence in Najd and the Arabian peninsula, another apparatus that he utilized was the *ikhwan* or brotherhood which was a military organization whose ideology was based on Wahhabi principles. Before the *ikhwan* formed as a military force that was committed to Wahhabi principles and to the expansion of Ibn Saud's power, many of them had become grounded in the *mutawwa'a*'s Wahhabi teachings.⁶⁶ Many members of the *ikhwan* had been desert nomads in the Arabian peninsula before joining that military force. Ibn Saud turned them into a large and highly regimented group which engaged in raids and other military actions, whenever it was necessary to quell rebellions or extend his power. Their allegiance to Wahhabi principles and to Ibn Saud provided the kind of thorough-going cohesion that helped Ibn Saud unite the tribes of Saudi Arabia and maintain stability in that kingdom. He funded the *mutawwa'a* and the *ikhwan*, which was one of the factors that encouraged their allegiance to him.⁶⁷ While the *mutawwa'a* educated the people of the Arabian

peninsula in Wahhabi principles and, at times, imposed these ideas on people forcefully, the *ikhwan* used physical means to extend the reach of Wahhabi principles and Ibn Saud's authority.⁶⁸

Yet, while Ibn Saud attempted to utilize the *mutawwa'a* and the *ikhwan* together with his personal dynamism and persuasiveness to create cohesion among the tribes of the Arabian peninsula, pre-existing tribal differences simmered. Some of these underlying conflicts came to the surface during the revolts of some of the members of the *ikhwan* between 1927 and 1930.⁶⁹ A number of the *ikhwan* who engaged in these revolts against Ibn Saud and the Saud tribe had been at war with the Saudis on previous occasions and may have resented the increasing power of Ibn Saud and his tribe.⁷⁰ The members of the *ikhwan* who engaged in the revolt also declared a long list of grievances against Ibn Saud and his regime, which included their opposition to: (1) what they perceived as Ibn Saud's alliance with Egypt and Great Britain; (2) Ibn Saud's importation of the telegraph, the telephone, and automobiles into the Arabian peninsula (all of which the revolutionaries considered to be antithetical to Islam); and (3) the imposition of a centralized tax system.⁷¹ As the hostilities developed into open warfare between Ibn Saud and his allies within and outside of the *ikhwan*, on the one hand, and Ibn Saud's enemies (many of whom were members of the *ikhwan*'s "anti-Saud" faction), on the other, the British shifted their alliances between groups in order to maximize their leverage within the region.⁷² As a result of Ibn Saud's clever tactical maneuvers and other factors, by 1930 he succeeded in quelling the revolt of the *ikhwan*.⁷³

The Modern Saudi State Takes Firm Root

Having defeated the rebellious *ikhwan* by 1930 and having acquired the title of "King of Saudi Arabia" by 1932 (with this new nation-state having been given the name "Saudi Arabia" in the same year), Ibn Saud was then in a strong position to unify the burgeoning Saudi state, utilizing Wahhabism as well as his own religious, political, and military prowess.⁷⁴ Referring to the early 1930s and subsequent periods, Alexei Vassiliev writes,

The new kingdom of Saudi Arabia extended over most of the Arabian peninsula, absorbing several feudal-tribal groupings that had previously been dependent on the Ottoman Empire. The creation of a centralized state corresponded to the overall interests of the feudal-tribal nobility, the merchants and the majority of the population, ensuring security and putting an end to tribal feuds. However, centralization brought growing taxes and strengthened the military-bureaucratic machinery, which substantially restricted the nomads' traditional "democratic" freedoms. The preaching of a "purified"

Islam in its Wahhabi form reinforced the Saud [family's] struggle to unite all the territories of [central Arabia].⁷⁵

Ibn Saud also consolidated his power in the Arabian peninsula by emphasizing his family's genealogical relationship to the branch of the Arabian Anaza tribe which was one of the most well-respected, numerous, and powerful tribes in Arabia.⁷⁶ He attempted to give the impression of caring about all of his subjects by allowing them, in theory at least, to come to him or his subordinates with hardships they may be experiencing that Ibn Saud's government could potentially address.⁷⁷ One of several ways that Ibn Saud attempted to express his religious authority was by bearing the title of Imam, which in the Sunni tradition refers to the person who leads prayers in a mosque.⁷⁸ In addition to referring to Ibn Saud's potential to lead Islamic prayers, the title of Imam represented Ibn Saud's leadership in terms of standing for the "true Islam" and his commitment to protecting the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.⁷⁹ Ibn Saud and his allies hoped that this title would enable him and his emerging government to "cement the society of Saudi Arabia and sanctify the supreme state power."⁸⁰

Because Ibn Saud, his successors, and other members of the Saudi government gain much of their legitimacy from Islam, these leaders have had a complex, nuanced, tense, and contradictory relationship with the members of that nation's ulema. In describing the relationship between Saudi governmental leaders and the Saudi ulema, Tim Niblock states that while the ulema has played a role in providing religious legitimacy to the Saudi government, the relationship between these two entities has

had a restrictive element – defining the parameters within which each has been able to move. The state, for its part, has had to act within the circle prescribed by the Wahhabi ulema so as to retain the support of this vital movement. Policies which might offend the religious sensibilities of the ulema have had to be avoided. But the necessary involvement of the ulema in the regulation of Saudi society has not been limited simply to influencing government policy. More significant have been the direct responsibilities devolved to the religious leaders enabling them to mould the character of Saudi society. Their control of the mosques (a powerful instrument for shaping public opinion) is natural, but they have also played a prominent role in the educational system and in regulating social conduct through the Committees for the Promotion of Good and the Prevention of Evil. The extent of their powers in these spheres has varied over time, but a powerful influence in shaping Saudi society has been consistently maintained.⁸¹

Thus, the leaders of the Saudi government and the ulema maintain a complicated and, at times, ambiguous relationship.

Ibn Saud and the Arabian Peninsula's Oil

In the early 1930s, as Ibn Saud perceived that his power within Saudi Arabia was relatively secure, he embarked on a series of oil concessions to American oil companies. He chose to make these concessions to American, instead of British, companies because Saudi Arabia was surrounded by British colonies and dependencies on almost every side and Ibn Saud and other Saudis did not trust the British. One of the reasons that he gravitated toward the Americans was because, from his perspective, they had had no colonial ventures in the Middle East at the time.⁸² In 1933, Standard Oil of California (SOCAL) received a major oil concession from the Saudi government. This agreement was to yield colossal profits for SOCAL and only limited financial gains for the Saudi government.⁸³ One of the reasons the agreement was slanted heavily in favor of SOCAL was because the Saudi government had virtually no knowledge of oil exploration, drilling, refining, and export. Saudi Arabia, like other countries in the Middle East which would prove to be oil-rich, had virtually no experts or infrastructure in the areas that would enable them to profit directly from the natural resources within their own borders.

Thus, the Saudi government was wholly dependent on SOCAL for the harnessing of what was ostensibly Saudi Arabia's own oil. Another reason that Ibn Saud approved an agreement that was apparently disadvantageous to Saudi Arabia was because his government was in dire need of money. The agreement with SOCAL enabled the Saudi government to receive limited financial benefits in the form of royalties and loans. The oil concession to SOCAL also exempted the company from all direct and indirect taxes which would have been levied by the Saudi government. This stipulation prevented the Saudi government from receiving massive amounts of income, while substantially increasing SOCAL's profits.⁸⁴

Commerce and revenue related to oil was to become an overwhelming factor in Saudi Arabia's international standing and in the development of its society.⁸⁵ Indeed, some segments of Saudi society not related to oil production suffered serious losses as a result of the economic processes that Saudi Arabia's oil industry set into motion.⁸⁶ For example, as the country opened its economy to imports, which benefited many of Saudi Arabia's large-scale commercial interests, these imports played a role in almost completely destroying the handicrafts sector of the nation's economy while damaging the agricultural and pastoral sectors. Concomitantly, during the 1950s there were stark declines in Saudi Arabia's agricultural production. In addition, the lack of strong governmental policies devoted to developing and preserving local production caused traditional Saudis who had been involved in agriculture to suffer.⁸⁷ Lastly, the royal family favored people in its own

clan. For example, when income tax was introduced in the kingdom in 1950, members of the Saud family were made exempt.⁸⁸

As the Saudi royal family's wealth and opulence continued to increase during the 1950s, some members of Saudi Arabia's ulema (as well as others within the kingdom) began to criticize King Saud and the ruling family for their violations of basic Islamic principles related to such matters as favoritism, modesty, careful use of wealth, self-discipline, caring for the poor, and the responsibility of Muslim leaders to assure socio-economic equity.⁸⁹ These criticisms, which many in the ulema leveled against the Saudi regime, were among the first set of Islamically-based critiques of the Saudi regime from within Saudi Arabia. Several of the grievances which al-Qaida and other Islamist groups in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries directed against the Saudi regime are very similar to those which some members of the Saudi ulema had formulated in the 1950s. Al-Qaida and other Islamist groups would come to strongly oppose future Saudi regimes for a number of reasons including those Saudi governments' strong alliance with the West, the enormous gaps between rich and poor in the country, the extravagances of the Saud family, and their favoritism toward each other. Many of these elements came into existence largely because of Saudi Arabia's oil wealth and its relationship with Western countries.

During much of the 1960s and 1970s, under the leadership of King Faisal and King Khalid, the Saudi state's political leadership was in a position to set the priorities for the kingdom's future. The consolidation of the Saud family's rule together with the country's steadily increasing oil revenue positioned the government to implement policies that stood to benefit increasingly large segments of the Saudi populace. The government implemented large-scale policies that involved economic and social development as well as legal and administrative changes. These actions expanded the state's leadership and influence in Saudi society. Consistent with these approaches, the government provided subsidies and welfare benefits to Bedouins and other Saudi citizens in non-urban areas. At the same time, the government continued to reinforce the importance of Islam within most of the affairs of the Saudi state.⁹⁰

An Islamic Socialist State

Between 1963 and 1975, the Saudi government established a wide range of government ministries (such as the Ministries of Information, Justice, Higher Education, Public Works, and Housing, among others) in its efforts to expand its influence and provide some of the benefits of the nation's oil wealth to the broader Saudi populace.⁹¹ During the 1960s, the Saudi government created the foundation for its social welfare system which would eventually offer

free government-supported education, health care, and unemployment and retirement benefits to every Saudi citizen.⁹² This system had the advantage of serving some of the basic needs of Saudi citizens while potentially creating a level of loyalty to the Saudi state that might lower the likelihood of revolts, Islamic and otherwise, against the government. The Saudi government also explained that this social safety net exemplified Islamic principles of compassion, generosity, justice, and the welfare of the Islamic community.⁹³

The Saudi government attempted to increase the citizenry's dependence on the state in other ways also. For example, during the 1960s and 1970s there was a sharp increase in the numbers of Saudis employed by the government. When government employees expressed grievances against the Saudi state or society, whether or not these grievances were based on Islam, these individuals often lost their government jobs. This tactic enabled the Saudi state to lessen the likelihood of certain forms of opposition, including resistance from Islamists.⁹⁴

By the end of the 1970s, the Saudi state and Saudi society had been substantially changed. The Saudi government had created a centralized state, based on the government's understanding of Wahhabi principles, with a capable administrative machinery in place. The expansive Saudi social welfare system operated in a way that enabled it to provide benefits directly to Saudi citizens. This arrangement engendered the loyalty of large segments of the Saudi populace to the state. During this period, these kinds of measures usually provided the Saudi state with some protection from Islamist opposition.⁹⁵

Islamist Opposition to the Saudi State

In spite of the Saudi government's broad-ranging efforts to obstruct rebellion by Islamists within the kingdom, a group of Saudi Islamists seized the Great Mosque in Mecca in November 1979. This siege lasted two weeks. Juhayman al-Utaybi (1936–80) and the 200 to 300 men who accompanied him expressed several grievances against the Saudi government, which included this Islamist group's: (1) desire to overthrow the Saudi royal family because of their misuse of wealth; (2) objection to the Saudi system of government which is based on monarchy, a system of government for which there is no basis in the Quran or Hadith; (3) belief that legitimate Muslim rulers are elected by Muslim believers and those leaders must reject oppression; (4) conviction that all non-Sunnis should be barred from the hajj and any participation in state affairs; and (5) belief that the state must discontinue all relationships with Western countries and operate in a manner that is completely independent from them.⁹⁶ The soldiers in the Saudi military, who solved this crisis by killing some members of al-Utaybi's group while imprisoning others, attempted to move against this group carefully so as to minimize damage to Mecca's Great Mosque, which is Islam's holiest site.⁹⁷ While the actions of al-Utaybi's group

were not supported by many Saudi citizens (largely because they involved seizing Islam's holiest mosque), the protest represented a significant manifestation of Islamists' grievances against the Saudi state. By the early 1990s, Usama bin Laden and al-Qaida would come to express grievances very similar to those of al-Utaybi and his group.⁹⁸

As a result of the seizure of the Great Mosque, the Iranian revolution, and unrest in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province (which has a substantial Shiite population), between 1980 and 1985 the Saudi government implemented a sweeping development plan that involved the reassertion of Islamically-based policies such as the construction of new mosques, the revitalization of strict Islamic education in the nation's schools, the renewed enforcement of austere Islamic moral codes, and the strengthening of restrictions on the role of women in the workplace. King Fahd also gave himself the title "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques" as a way of highlighting the Islamic character of his position as the leader of Saudi Arabia. These measures were intended to exhibit the Islamic legitimacy of the regime in the face of Islamist opposition, while tightening the central government's control over various aspects of Saudi society.⁹⁹

There was another aspect of long-standing Saudi government policy, which, while attempting to increase the Islamic legitimacy of the Saudi government, may have had the countervailing effect of strengthening the Islamists. During extended periods in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the Saudi government allowed certain Islamists to teach in Saudi universities, all of which were supported by the Saudi government. Some of these Islamist teachers, including several Egyptians, engaged in strident critiques of the Saudi government. These teachers often advocated the overthrow of the Saudi government and the establishment of a new government in Saudi Arabia that reflected Islamic modesty in terms of the use of its wealth, its equal distribution of wealth, and its independence from Western countries, among other principles. These teachers were one kind of catalyst behind certain Saudi Islamists who were opposed to the Saudi government. Indeed, two such Islamist teachers who taught in Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Qutb, who was the brother of Sayyid Qutb, and Abdallah Azzam, a Palestinian Islamist intellectual, were influential mentors of Usama bin Laden.¹⁰⁰ The ideas that these Islamist teachers conveyed to Bin Laden figured prominently in his ideas as he developed his anti-Saudi doctrines both during and after the first Gulf War.

Saudi Arabia and the First Gulf War (1990–1991)

Indeed, the first Gulf War was another significant event in the Saudi government's history and in its relationship to Islamists, on the one hand, and the United States, on the other. The first Gulf War also constituted a momentous threshold in terms of Usama bin Laden's thinking and the

development of al-Qaida. The event that precipitated the first Gulf War was the entrance of large numbers of Iraqi soldiers into Kuwait on August 2, 1990. By August 7, King Fahd had decided that because the presence of Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait posed a threat to Saudi security and specifically to the Saudi oil fields, which were just a few miles south of Kuwait, he would formally request military assistance from the United States to defend Saudi Arabia from a potential Iraqi attack. He would also allow the American military to use Saudi Arabia as a base of operations for a military action that would eventually oust the Iraqi military from Kuwait.¹⁰¹

In spite of the astronomical sums of money that the Saudi government had spent on defense – which amounted to roughly \$200 billion in the 1980s – the Saudi military was unprepared to defend the country against the possibility of an Iraqi attack on its territory from Iraq or Kuwait.¹⁰² In the view of King Fahd and others, this apparent weakness in the Saudi military made the presence of American and other soldiers in the Saudi kingdom necessary.¹⁰³ The largest share of the coalition military force, which was comprised of soldiers from almost 30 countries, was American. At the most intense period of the Gulf War, there were roughly 750,000 foreign soldiers in Saudi Arabia, with all of the equipment that they needed to operate.¹⁰⁴ The coalition's air war against Iraq began on January 17, 1991 and its ground war began on February 24, 1991. Major hostilities in the ground war ended four days later on February 28.¹⁰⁵

Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism, and Usama bin Laden

Usama bin Laden was born and lived much of his life in Saudi Arabia. In addition to other intellectual currents within Islam, various aspects of Wahhabism and the Saudi state's Wahhabi interpretation of Islam influenced Bin Laden's thought. Indeed, there are several similarities between Bin Laden's conception of the ideal Islamic state, on the one hand, and laws and policies of Saudi Arabia, on the other. Aspects of the current Saudi state with which Bin Laden and members of al-Qaida agree include: (a) prohibitions on alcohol, gambling, and the possession and/or exhibition of any forms of Western cultural production including movies, television shows, magazines, games, etc.; (b) modest dress and separation of women and men who are not related to each other; and (c) prohibitions on sex outside of heterosexual marriage.

At the same time, Usama bin Laden and al-Qaida have represented a form of revolutionary anti-Saudi Wahhabism that opposes the Saudi state on several crucial issues. First, Bin Laden and al-Qaida have stood against Saudi Arabia's alliances with various Western countries, including the United States. Most significantly, Bin Laden and members of al-Qaida have stood

against the Saudi government allying itself with the very Western countries that through billions of dollars per year in aid to the Israeli government enable that government to oppress Palestinians. Second, Bin Laden and the members of al-Qaida objected to the stationing of hundreds of thousands of American troops in Saudi Arabia during and after the first Gulf War and the continuing presence of American soldiers in that country after the war, because, like many other Muslims, they have maintained that non-Muslim soldiers should not be responsible for defending the country that contains Islam's holiest cities, Mecca and Medina. In fact, Bin Laden and the members of al-Qaida viewed the Western soldiers in Saudi Arabia as an occupying force. Third, Bin Laden and the members of al-Qaida have stated that what they perceive to be the lavish and extravagant lifestyles of the members of the Saudi royal family violate deeply-valued Islamic principles pertaining to modesty and simplicity. In a similar vein, Bin Laden and the members of al-Qaida have maintained that the Saudi government has not adequately addressed the gap between the rich and poor within the kingdom and that the wealth in Saudi Arabia has not been distributed fairly. Thus, while Bin Laden and the members of al-Qaida may have agreed with certain aspects of the Saudi government's policies, there are other areas where they have vociferously disagreed. These areas of disagreement have comprised some of the reasons for Bin Laden's and al-Qaida's desires for revolutionary action against the Saudi government and other opponents of al-Qaida.¹⁰⁶

With the history of Saudi Arabia and of the Wahhabi movement in that country as a backdrop, examining aspects of Usama bin Laden's life can provide helpful insights about some of his motives, in general, and his objectives in establishing and leading al-Qaida, in particular. Usama bin Laden was born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in 1957 into a family with ancestral roots in northwest Yemen.¹⁰⁷ The deep Islamic piety of Usama's father, Muhammad bin Laden, had a profound influence on Usama's own Islamic faith and practice. Muhammad bin Laden was steeped in the Wahhabi tradition and made sure that all his children, including Usama bin Laden, received an education within that tradition.¹⁰⁸ In addition to the strict religious and moral training that Bin Laden received during his childhood, he was an employee of his father's construction company when he was on vacation from school, working on a variety of projects where he acquired a range of skills related to the construction industry.¹⁰⁹ Usama bin Laden received his primary, secondary, and university education in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and may have also received training in various aspects of Islam in Mecca and Medina.¹¹⁰ Sources provide differing dates regarding the date of Bin Laden's graduation from university as well as his major field of study.

Bin Laden himself stated that he graduated in 1981 from Jeddah's King Abdul Aziz University with a degree in economics.¹¹¹ Other sources state that he studied engineering or public administration, or that he never

graduated from college.¹¹² In any event, two of Bin Laden's influential teachers at King Abdul Aziz University were Muhammad Qutb and Abdullah Azzam, who strongly advocated internationalizing physical jihad so that the targets of Muslims' militant acts would include Western targets, not just the Soviets in Afghanistan or anti-Islamist governments in the majority-Muslim world; this aligned with Bin Laden's hope, and that of other Islamists, for the establishment of a global Islamic state.¹¹³

It seems that Muhammad Qutb's ideas closely reflected those of his brother, Sayyid Qutb. Among other ideas from Sayyid Qutb that seem to have influenced Bin Laden, the concept of *jahili* societies and the obligation that Sayyid Qutb believed that Muslims have to engage in physical jihad against them seem to have had a profound impact on Bin Laden's thought and action. Indeed, both while Bin Laden was growing up and during his time at the university, he regularly met well-known Islamists. Especially in Bin Laden's early years, his father and elder brothers arranged social gatherings where Bin Laden met such people. Bin Laden's father also financed evening meetings, where Islamists led discussions on topics related to Islam.¹¹⁴

Usama bin Laden in Afghanistan and Pakistan

A few weeks after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on December 25, 1979, Usama bin Laden went to Pakistan to meet with the Afghan leaders Burhanuddin Rabbani and Abdul Rasool Sayyaf, whom he had met previously at gatherings during a hajj in Saudi Arabia.¹¹⁵ These contacts helped Bin Laden position himself in such a way that enabled him to assist the mujahideen, the anti-Soviet militants who fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan. During most of the mujahideen's war against the Soviets, Bin Laden recruited militants by the thousands and organized their transportation into Afghanistan, established mujahideen training camps, and supervised the building of fortifications and tunnels at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. These structures allowed members of the mujahideen to escape from Afghanistan, find protection in Pakistan, and then re-enter Afghanistan.¹¹⁶ Bin Laden used his own money to fund these and related projects.¹¹⁷

Around 1985, Bin Laden founded al-Qaida (which means "the base" in Arabic) which was comprised largely of Egyptian militants and had the goals of supporting the mujahideen in their war against the Soviets and recruiting Islamic militants from various parts of the majority-Muslim world to join the mujahideen in their struggle. The number of Arabs who were recruited to fight in Afghanistan may have been in the low tens of thousands.¹¹⁸ Bin Laden engaged in this international recruitment process partly as a result of the influence of Abdullah Azzam, who spent a substantial

portion of the 1980s in Afghanistan. Azzam believed that the recruitment of Muslims from many countries could help build an Islamist force which, after the war in Afghanistan, could engage in worldwide physical jihad with the purpose of establishing a global Islamic state.¹¹⁹ At the same time, during the war in Afghanistan, the United States supported the work of al-Qaida and the mujahideen, because of the United States' commitment to ousting the Soviets from Afghanistan.¹²⁰

On a number of occasions, Bin Laden himself operated heavy machinery which played a role in the building of tunnels and fortresses, and he personally engaged in several battles against Soviet soldiers.¹²¹ Hamza Mohammed, a Palestinian volunteer in Afghanistan who was one of Bin Laden's deputies there, described his view of Bin Laden's first-hand involvement in the war against the Soviets:

[Bin Laden] was a hero to us because he was always on the front line, always moving ahead of everybody else. He not only gave his money, but he also gave himself. He came down from his palace to live with the Afghan peasants and the Arab fighters. He cooked with them, ate with them, dug trenches with them. That was Bin Laden's way.¹²²

Reports of Bin Laden risking his life for the Islamist cause as well as his financial contributions to al-Qaida and the mujahideen were circulated widely in Islamist circles and reinforced his image, in the minds of his supporters, as a heroic, sincere, and pious Muslim who was wholly committed to ousting foreigners from Muslim lands and spreading Islam. Bin Laden's rejection of the extravagant and comfortable lifestyle that he could have had, if he had used his reported \$300 million for his personal benefit, continually reinforced the conception of Bin Laden – in the eyes of his supporters – as an altruistic, self-giving man who had committed his entire life to God and to Islam.¹²³ As Bin Laden continued his resistance against the Soviets, his antipathy for the Saudi regime rose, reaching a particularly intense level when the Saudi government refused Bin Laden's request to provide his own soldiers to defend Saudi Arabia from Iraq's aggression in Kuwait during 1990 and 1991.

Eventually, with substantial military, financial, and political support from the United States, the mujahideen was victorious in its war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. The Soviet government began the withdrawal of its soldiers from Afghanistan during May 1988 and concluded this process in February 1989.¹²⁴ During and after the Soviet withdrawal, Bin Laden expressed his belief that the mujahideen's victory was a direct result of God's intervention. Bin Laden believed that much as God had repeatedly favored Muhammad's armies in their victories against unjust aggressors who wanted to destroy Islam in the seventh century, God showed favor to the Muslim

armies in Afghanistan and enabled them to defeat the atheistic Soviet aggressors who sought to destroy Islam in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Bin Laden gave virtually no attention to the fact that the United States aided the mujahideen in their victory and he placed great emphasis on the role that he and other Muslims had played in the defeat of the Soviets. Bin Laden believed that the Muslim victory in Afghanistan was one major step toward a worldwide Islamic victory, which would be comprised of an eventual defeat of the non-Muslim regimes throughout the world and the establishment of a global Islamic state.¹²⁵ Bin Laden stated that the victory in Afghanistan was a powerful catalyst for al-Qaida in its effort to implement future military operations against anti-Islamic interests in that organization's continued endeavor to defeat their enemies and to spread Islam throughout the world, much as the victories of Muhammad's army in the seventh century provided the catalyst for spreading Islam through substantial portions of the world for many years after Muhammad's death.¹²⁶

Usama bin Laden in Sudan

At least two factors influenced Bin Laden's decision to move from Afghanistan to Sudan. First, Bin Laden was deeply frustrated that the Saudi government rejected his offer to provide Islamist soldiers from Afghanistan and other parts of the world in the Saudi government's effort to eject the Iraqi military from Kuwait in 1990 and 1991.¹²⁷ Even more insulting to Bin Laden was the fact that the Saudi government turned to the United States and other countries, whose governments were, in Bin Laden's view, enemies of Islam, to defend Saudi Arabia which contained Islam's holiest sites.¹²⁸ Second, while Bin Laden took great pride in the mujahideen's victory against the Soviets, he was saddened and aggravated by the in-fighting among various groups in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal.¹²⁹ Thus, Bin Laden went to Khartoum, Sudan in 1991 where he aligned himself with the Sudanese Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi (b. 1932) and where he attempted to establish a stable base of operations for creating a "truly Islamic state" in Sudan. Bin Laden also wanted to use his time in Sudan to make efforts to expunge the United States' military, political, economic, and religious influence from the majority-Muslim world.¹³⁰

Bin Laden found Sudan to be a country which would enable him to engage in his business enterprises in such a way that they would prosper, while enabling him to contribute significant assets from those projects to al-Qaida for the purpose of attacking Western and other non-Muslim interests with the goal of undercutting those interests and expanding Islam's reach.¹³¹ Bin Laden developed a symbiotic relationship with Hassan al-Turabi, who was the leader of Sudan's National Islamic Front (NIF), was

a strict Islamist, agreed with Bin Laden's goals of creating Islamist states in Sudan and throughout the world, and was strongly allied with Sudan's government.¹³² Bin Laden contributed to Sudan economically by employing Sudanese citizens in the various businesses that he operated there, including his import-export company, an investment company that marketed a variety of agricultural products, and a construction company, which was devoted to public works in Sudan. Bin Laden also opened a \$50 million bank account in al-Shamal Islamic Bank, which helped recapitalize that institution, while he provided the NIF with communication equipment, radios, and rifles.¹³³ In return, al-Turabi and the Sudanese government gave Bin Laden the freedom to establish a massive set of operations that would enable al-Qaida to engage in militant attacks against Western interests and spread its Islamist ideas in Sudan and various parts of the majority-Muslim world.¹³⁴

Using his freedom and the large revenues from his businesses, Bin Laden organized training camps in Sudan for Islamist militants at which thousands of Islamists could receive instruction in militant tactics. A large number of the trainers in these camps had fought in Afghanistan and had trained members of the mujahideen there.¹³⁵

Bin Laden viewed his social service work and the training of Islamist militants as two ways of practicing his Islamic faith. Bin Laden believed that much like Muhammad had helped the underprivileged people of Mecca and Medina during the seventh century, so too he was helping the underprivileged people of Sudan by providing them with economic opportunities.¹³⁶ He also viewed the training and support of Islamist militants as being in conformity with the example of Muhammad in the sense that during Muhammad's life he took the necessary measures to defend Islam from its enemies. So too, Bin Laden believed that training Islamist militants and sending them into battle against modern enemies of Islam were actions, following the example of the Prophet, that would help Muslims defend themselves from their current enemies.¹³⁷ In addition, Bin Laden viewed his simple lifestyle as being in full conformity with Muhammad's example, a fitting model for Muslims, and one of several ways of showing the difference between his modesty and the ostentation of the Saudi royal family.¹³⁸ According to one of Bin Laden's friends, Khaled al-Fawwaz, Bin Laden lived without the comforts of a multimillionaire; referring to Bin Laden's house in Sudan, al-Fawwaz stated, "When I observed [Bin Laden's] house and his way of living, I couldn't believe my eyes. He had no fridge at home, no air conditioning, no fancy car, nothing."¹³⁹ Bin Laden's ability to project the simplicity of his lifestyle, together with his skill in expressing what he believed to be the grounding of his ideas in the Quran, Hadith, and example of the Prophet, made him a persuasive religio-political figure for many Muslims in various parts of the world.¹⁴⁰

Bin Laden's Involvement in Somalia

In the midst of his efforts to generate revenue for al-Qaida, train and educate Islamist militants, and spread his message, Bin Laden claimed victory in the ousting of the United States' soldiers from Mogadishu, Somalia during the American military's Operation Restore Hope which began in December 1992. The goals of this operation were to provide humanitarian assistance and food to starving Somalis and to capture the Somali clan leader Mohamed Farrah Aideed, whose apprehension the United States government believed would lead to a decrease in violence in Somalia. Bin Laden and other members of al-Qaida viewed the American involvement in Somalia, which occurred roughly two years after the stationing of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers in Saudi Arabia, as part of an American strategy to conquer increasing amounts of territory in the majority-Muslim world.¹⁴¹ During a major battle in early October 1993 between American forces who were trying to capture Aideed, on the one hand, and opposing forces, including members of al-Qaida, on the other, 18 Americans and at least 500 Somalis were killed, while three American Black Hawk helicopters were shot down. After Bin Laden had heard of American military involvement in Somalia, he sent one of his military commanders, Abu Hafs, and an al-Qaida mortar specialist, among other al-Qaida members, to Somalia.¹⁴² The Somalis and al-Qaida members who battled the Americans in Somalia had gained their expertise in shooting down helicopters from the training they had received from American CIA agents in Afghanistan during the Afghan war against the Soviets; these Islamists then used this training in their successful attacks against the American soldiers in Somalia.¹⁴³ Within a week of this battle in Mogadishu, the United States announced its intention to withdraw from Somalia.¹⁴⁴

After what Bin Laden believed to be the victory of "true Muslims" in Afghanistan, the victory of al-Qaida and their Somali allies against the Americans in Somalia was further evidence for Bin Laden and the members of al-Qaida that, once again, God was blessing and empowering "true Muslims" with the ability to defeat the American aggressors in Muslim lands.¹⁴⁵ The victories in Afghanistan and Somalia were particularly potent for al-Qaida and the anti-American Somali militants because in both cases Muslim forces had defeated segments of two of the world's largest militaries (those of the Soviets and the Americans) and, in both cases, had caused portions of these militaries to withdraw from majority-Muslim countries.¹⁴⁶ Once again, after the victory of al-Qaida and its allies in Somalia, Bin Laden believed that God had granted them victory in the same way that God had granted the Prophet Muhammad and the anti-Crusader Muslims victories against their enemies in the seventh century and during the Crusades of the Middle Ages.¹⁴⁷ Bin Laden also believed that the announcement of the

withdrawal of American soldiers from Somalia so soon after the deaths of just 18 American soldiers was indicative of the weakness and cowardice of the Americans in combat (as the United States had already shown in its withdrawal of its forces from Lebanon after the Islamist attack in Beirut in 1983 which had killed 241 American Marines).¹⁴⁸

Usama bin Laden and the Internationalization of al-Qaida

Energized by the victory in Somalia, Bin Laden and al-Qaida continued in their efforts to support Islamist militants in various parts of the world. Al-Qaida opened a satellite office in Baku, Azerbaijan, sent militants to Chechnya to fight the Russians, dispatched additional Islamists to Tajikistan in order to strengthen the Islamist resistance there, supported al-Qaida affiliates in Jordan and Egypt, sent hundreds of Arabs who had fought in Afghanistan to battle alongside of Muslims in Bosnia, and established alliances with Islamist groups in Egypt, Algeria, Libya, and Syria.¹⁴⁹ In 1993, members of al-Qaida began planning the simultaneous attacks which were to take place against the United States' embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on August 7, 1998.¹⁵⁰ Because of Bin Laden's verbal attacks on the Saudi government and its belief that Bin Laden was a threat, he was stripped of his Saudi citizenship in 1994. By 1996, as a result of American pressure on Sudan's government, Bin Laden was expelled from that country and he returned to Afghanistan.¹⁵¹

Usama bin Laden's Interpretation of Islamic History

Bin Laden stated that he viewed his trip to Afghanistan in 1996 in much the same way as Muslims view Muhammad's departure from Mecca and trip to Medina (the hijra) in 622.¹⁵² The hijra, which marks the first year of the Muslim calendar, is of great importance to Muslims because: (1) it constitutes the departure of Muhammad and the early Muslim community from an extremely dangerous situation in Mecca; (2) Medina constituted a relatively stable location for the consolidation and spread of early Islam; and (3) Medina was the city that formed the base of operations for what Muslims perceive to be several successful battles against Islam's early enemies.¹⁵³ In a similar vein, Bin Laden believed that much like Muhammad faced a dangerous situation in Mecca, he too faced dangerous circumstances in Sudan and had to flee. Much like Muhammad used Medina as a base for defending and spreading Islam in the seventh century, so too Bin Laden wanted to use Afghanistan to defend and spread Islam in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As in almost every other aspect of his life,

Bin Laden relates his interpretation of Islamic history to his own actions in such a way that he believes justifies his actions and gives them ultimate significance, both in terms of his own life history and that of Islam.¹⁵⁴

Similarly, Bin Laden believed that al-Qaida's attacks against the United States' embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1998 were wholly justified on the basis of the Quran and Islamic history, in the sense that for Bin Laden the United States posed as much of a threat to Muslims in the modern era as Islam's enemies did to Muhammad and early Muslims in the seventh century. Bin Laden maintained that much like Muhammad and the early Muslims were justified in using force to defend Islam then, so too modern Muslims are justified in using force to oust Islam's enemies from Islamic lands today; the attacks in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were part of that process.¹⁵⁵

There are three aspects of the attacks against those embassies that carry religio-political symbolism for Bin Laden and al-Qaida. First, Bin Laden chose August 7, 1998 as the date for those attacks because August 7, 1990 was the date when the first American troops were dispatched to Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Desert Shield, an operation which Bin Laden viewed as sacrilegious to Islam; thus, Bin Laden wanted to attack the Americans on the same day that they began the "occupation" of Islam's holiest land.

Second, the attacks in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam took place simultaneously, which became a distinctive signature of al-Qaida's work in these and other attacks.¹⁵⁶ The symbolic significance of the *simultaneous* aspect of the attacks is twofold: (1) Bin Laden believed that Muhammad engaged in effective simultaneous attacks against his enemies and (2) simultaneous attacks could create a dramatic effect for the media – gaining attention for al-Qaida from Muslims and non-Muslims alike, while sending the message that *al-Qaida* is responsible for such actions.¹⁵⁷

The third symbolic aspect of the attacks against the embassies in east Africa was that al-Qaida was careful to initiate these actions at precisely the time many Muslims would be praying in mosques so as to lessen the potential harm of these actions on Muslims.¹⁵⁸ Bin Laden and al-Qaida took five years to plan these attacks and used their training camps in Afghanistan to prepare several of the leaders who conducted these assaults.¹⁵⁹

The United States' Attack on al-Qaida in Afghanistan

In response to al-Qaida's actions against the embassies, President Bill Clinton ordered a series of cruise missile attacks against the al-Qaida leadership, including Bin Laden, and suspected al-Qaida bases in Afghanistan; these attacks took place on August 20, 1998.¹⁶⁰ The United States' attack did not

succeed in killing Bin Laden, Zawahiri, or other significant leaders of al-Qaida because the evacuation of American diplomatic personnel from Pakistan and the evacuation of all foreigners from Kabul, together with other indications, left Bin Laden with the impression that the Americans intended to kill him. With this possibility in mind, Bin Laden seems to have left one of the main al-Qaida complexes in Afghanistan for a location that he believed the Americans were less likely to attack.¹⁶¹

One unintended consequence of the attacks against Bin Laden was that they reinforced the image of him as a hero in the minds of many Muslims. They began to view Bin Laden as a courageous man who was prepared to stand firm for his principles even in the face of a violent death, while confronting the most powerful military in the world. After the attacks and even after the September 11 attacks on the United States, "Usama" became an increasingly popular name among many Muslims in the world.¹⁶² In the words of Maulana Sami ul-Haq, a Muslim leader who runs one of the largest Islamic schools in Pakistan, the attacks against Bin Laden made him "a symbol for the whole Islamic world against all those outside powers who were trying to crush Muslims. He is the courageous one who raised his voice against them. He is a hero to us, but it is America that first made him a hero."¹⁶³

Usama bin Laden and the Taliban

When Bin Laden reentered Afghanistan from Somalia in 1996, a civil war was raging in Afghanistan. By that time, the Taliban, a very strict Islamist group which was comprised mostly of ethnic Pashtuns, controlled most of Afghanistan.¹⁶⁴ The Taliban's main opponent in Afghanistan was the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, which is also called the Northern Alliance. While the Pashtuns, who controlled the Taliban and are the single largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, comprise 42 percent of Afghanistan's population, the Northern Alliance consisted of Tajiks (27 percent of Afghanistan's population), Hazaras (9 percent), and Uzbeks (9 percent).¹⁶⁵ By 1996, this Northern Alliance was able to maintain some control over Afghanistan's northern provinces, while the Taliban controlled most of the rest of the country. During the 1980s and 1990s Bin Laden maintained a strong relationship with some of the strictest Islamists in Afghanistan, who were ethnic Pashtuns, many of whose Islamic leaders had been educated in strict Islamic schools in Pakistan.¹⁶⁶ Because of Bin Laden's own strict Islamic beliefs and other factors he identified very strongly with the strict Islamists who were members of the Taliban. Thus, Bin Laden had supported the Taliban for some time before he returned to Afghanistan in 1996 and he viewed the Taliban as his natural ally when he returned to Afghanistan in that year.¹⁶⁷

For example, Bin Laden gave the Taliban 3 million dollars at a crucial point in 1996 as the Taliban prepared to conquer Kabul, Afghanistan's capital.¹⁶⁸ Another instance of Bin Laden's military support of the Taliban was when 300 of his soldiers fought alongside soldiers from the Taliban during the winter of 1997.¹⁶⁹ By 1999, 400 Arabs under Bin Laden's leadership were fighting against the Northern Alliance.¹⁷⁰

Yet, Bin Laden's relationship with the Taliban was not always smooth. While at significant junctures Bin Laden and the Taliban were close allies, there were at least four differences between him and the Taliban which at different times and in varying ways caused rifts between the two sides: (1) There was an ethnic difference – Bin Laden was an Arab while the majority of the Taliban were Pashtun. (2) At times, some members of the Taliban and Bin Laden differed with respect to priorities. Bin Laden wanted to secure Afghanistan for the Taliban and al-Qaida so that he could use Afghanistan as a stepping stone for continuing his global war against the West and his hoped-for establishment of a global Islamic state, while some members of the Taliban put a much higher priority on Afghanistan's welfare than expanding the Islamist struggle outside of Afghanistan. (3) Bin Laden had significantly more money at his disposal than the Taliban which sometimes caused jealousy and bitterness on the Taliban's part. (4) During certain periods, there were power struggles between Mullah Omar, an important Taliban leader, and Bin Laden over who should be in charge of Afghanistan's Islamists and the future direction of al-Qaida and the Taliban.¹⁷¹ Although there were periods of friction between al-Qaida and the Taliban, their relationship was usually characterized by reciprocity; Bin Laden provided financial and other forms of support to the Taliban, while the Taliban protected Bin Laden and al-Qaida, allowing them to operate within Afghanistan.¹⁷²

In spite of the alternating reciprocity and tensions between al-Qaida and the Taliban, Bin Laden used his time in Afghanistan in pursuit of several of his goals. For instance, during this period, he issued a number of significant statements which articulated al-Qaida's objectives, the Islamic foundations of the movement, and al-Qaida's grievances against Western governments and most of the governments in the majority-Muslim world.¹⁷³ Among these, a notable statement was the "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," which was issued on August 23, 1996.¹⁷⁴ In this statement, Bin Laden blamed the "Zionist-Crusader Alliance" (which includes the United States and Israel) for "massacres" in many places, including Iraq, the West Bank and Gaza, and Somalia.¹⁷⁵ Bin Laden believed that the American soldiers who were in Saudi Arabia during and after the first Gulf War were part of this broader Western war against Muslims because, in his words, they were "occupying" Saudi Arabia.¹⁷⁶ In this statement, Bin Laden also expressed his belief that, given the continuing massacres against Muslims, the Saudi government's alliance

with the United States, and the Saudi royal family's oppression against Muslims in Saudi Arabia, true Muslims such as himself are left with no choice but to use military means to attack all those enemies of al-Qaida.¹⁷⁷

Many of the principles which were articulated in that 1996 statement were restated in a declaration by the World Islamic Front entitled "Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders" which was released on February 23, 1998.¹⁷⁸ This statement was approved by Bin Laden, who represented al-Qaida, Ayman al-Zawahiri who was the leader of the Islamic Jihad Group in Egypt, as well as the leaders of the Egyptian Islamic Group, Jama'at al-Ulema-i Pakistan, and the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh, all of whose names appear on the declaration.¹⁷⁹ This was the first major statement that was approved by Bin Laden and Zawahiri and was one of several indications of their strong alliance with each other, which was to extend into the foreseeable future. The fact that all of these leaders approved the declaration signifies the continuing transnational coalitions that Bin Laden was building with Islamist groups as he continued his battle against Western countries and their allies in the majority-Muslim world.

Another manifestation of al-Qaida's expansive reach and its commitment to using violence in its attempt to eject all American influences from the majority-Muslim world was the attack against the USS *Cole*, the destroyer which was attacked by Islamists during a refueling stop in a port in Aden, Yemen on October 12, 2000. The Islamists who were involved in this attack had received training and support in Afghanistan and used their expertise in a suicide attack which blew a 40- by 60-foot hole in the hull of the destroyer, killing 17 American sailors and injuring 31 others. The attack inflicted a quarter of a billion dollars' worth of damage, left the ship without a deployment from October 12, 2000 until November 29, 2003, and caused the United States to avoid using Aden as a port for its warships.¹⁸⁰

Bin Laden expressed enormous satisfaction as a result of this attack, partly because it constituted what he considered to be a successful and fully justified assault against a tangible symbol of American military aggression against the majority-Muslim world. For him, the United States' running "away [from Aden] in less than twenty-four hours after the attack" was another indication of American cowardice in the face of consistent military opposition.¹⁸¹ According to Bin Laden, the United States manifested a similar level of cowardice in its withdrawals from Vietnam at the end of that war, from Beirut after the Islamist attack against the American Marine barracks there in 1983, and from Mogadishu in 1993 after 18 American soldiers were killed in the city.¹⁸² Bin Laden's perception of the United States' weakness and cowardice was one of the reasons that he believed the United States would not engage in a long ground war against himself, al-Qaida, and the Taliban after al-Qaida's attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001.¹⁸³

Usama bin Laden, al-Qaida, and the September 11 Attacks

The next major attack which al-Qaida coordinated took place on September 11, 2001 and was directed against the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon building in Arlington, Virginia, and, in all likelihood, the White House in Washington, DC. One plane hit one of the towers of the World Trade Center, a second struck the other tower, a third crashed into the Pentagon, and a fourth plane, which probably had the White House as its target, was downed as a result of the intervention of its passengers and crashed in Somerset County, Pennsylvania.¹⁸⁴ Just under 3,000 people died as a result of these attacks.¹⁸⁵ Fifteen of the hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, two were from Egypt, one was from Lebanon, and one was from the United Arab Emirates.¹⁸⁶ Most of these men were deeply committed Muslims, believed that the West through its military, political, economic, and cultural imperialism sought to destroy Islam, and harbored feelings of alienation from significant aspects of their respective societies. They may have believed that in striking at a “far enemy,” namely the United States, they were part of al-Qaida’s larger battle against the West and its destructive impact on the majority-Muslim world. Most of the hijackers had received training in Afghanistan and received support and coordination from al-Qaida’s global network, including leading al-Qaida figures in Afghanistan. Their time in Afghanistan included receiving additional education in Islam as well some limited instruction on how to carry out the September 11 attacks.¹⁸⁷

The letter which may have been written by Muhammad Atta, the lead September 11 hijacker, to his fellow-hijackers is full of Quranic citations and commands to the hijackers to pray during various stages of their operation. For example, the final paragraph of this letter states, in part:

And then, when the zero-hour comes, open your chest and welcome death in the cause of God, always remembering your prayers to ease your mission before the goal And let your last words be, “There is no God but God and Muhammad is his messenger.” And then comes the meeting in the highest paradise with the mercy of God When you see the masses of the infidels, remember those [enemies of the Prophet] that numbered about ten thousand and how God granted victory to the believers. (Quran 33:22)¹⁸⁸

This letter attempts to embed the hijackers’ mission within certain Quranic proclamations and the life of the Prophet Muhammad; it even equates the hijackers’ operations against the infidel Westerners with Muhammad’s battles against the roughly 10,000 enemies of Islam which he and the early Muslims faced during the Battle of the Trench in the seventh century. It attempts to encourage the hijackers by stating that much like those early

Muslims who fought the seventh-century infidels with God's blessing and were victorious, so too the September 11 hijackers are involved in a contemporary battle against modern-day infidels who are attempting to destroy Islam, and those who support the hijackers' cause and the cause of Islam will also be victorious.

In a variety of statements after the September 11 attacks, Bin Laden continued to praise the heroism of the hijackers while justifying their actions on the basis of his interpretation of Islam.¹⁸⁹ Bin Laden stated that the 19 hijackers (whom he called students) "did a very great deed, a glorious deed. God rewarded them and we pray that their parents will be proud of them, because they raised Muslims' heads high and taught America a lesson it won't forget, with God's will."¹⁹⁰ Bin Laden indirectly reminded his listeners that it was these 19 "students" who did the work that 19 Arab nations could have done when they engaged in the September 11 attacks "which shook America's throne, struck its economy right in the heart, and dealt the biggest military power a mighty blow, by the grace of God almighty."¹⁹¹

In Bin Laden's view, the hijackers struck hard at the destructive and rapacious global economy which is largely controlled by the United States, a country that uses its military in its attempt to force unbelief and humiliation on the world's Muslims.¹⁹² Bin Laden believes that the hijackers have shown a way to battle America that could undercut that country financially and militarily. For him, the September 11 attacks were damaging financially to the United States because they cost the United States "more than a trillion dollars."¹⁹³ According to Bin Laden, the attacks could be damaging to the United States militarily because as a result of them, the United States deployed thousands of soldiers to Afghanistan, where they are vulnerable to the attacks of Muslims.¹⁹⁴

Bin Laden predicted that the United States' post-September 11 response would turn its battle against Muslims into one that is far more destructive to that nation than the Vietnam War.¹⁹⁵ For Bin Laden, God's renewal of the global Islamic community will enable Muslims to topple the United States, much as God's blessing of Afghanistan's mujahideen enabled them to defeat the Soviets, which in Bin Laden's view was one factor that led to the demise of the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁶ In an interview between Usama bin Laden and Hamid Mir of the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*, Bin Laden discussed his justifications for the killing of American and other non-Muslim civilians in al-Qaida's attacks, including the September 11 attacks.¹⁹⁷

During various times in Islamic history, Muslims have interpreted the Quran and Hadith as forbidding or at least minimizing the allowable number of deaths of non-combatants at the hands of Muslims during warfare. According to Bin Laden, since Americans "pay taxes to their government, they elect their president, their government manufactures

arms” and uses them itself and provides them to a variety of governments which wage war against “true Muslims,” American citizens cannot be considered non-combatants at all since they either support or are complicit in their government’s massacres of Muslims across the world. Given this high level of complicity, all Americans (whether or not they are in the military) can be considered combatants and are legitimate targets of Islamically-based attacks.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, for Bin Laden, in this war against the West, the Quran and Hadith *obligate* all Muslims to engage in warfare against the West until, at minimum, all the governments of the majority-Muslim world are “truly Islamic.”¹⁹⁹

For Bin Laden, Muslims also have an obligation to wage war against the West in what could be considered traditional battlefield situations such as Afghanistan and Iraq.²⁰⁰ For example, in February 2003 as Bin Laden saw the American invasion of Iraq (which occurred in March 2003) on the horizon, he attempted to provide a strategy for Iraqis to resist the Americans and other “foreign occupiers.”²⁰¹ In his February 2003 statement, presciently, Bin Laden stated, “what the enemy fears most is urban and street warfare, in which heavy and costly human losses can be expected,” while he emphasized “the importance of dragging the enemy into a protracted, exhausting, close combat, making the most of camouflaged defense positions in plains, farms, hills and cities.”²⁰² Bin Laden also asserted the potential effectiveness of martyrdom operations (or suicide attacks) “which have inflicted unprecedented harm on America and Israel, thanks to God Almighty.”²⁰³ Bin Laden also suggested that much as the Prophet Muhammad used creative and beneficial methods (such as building trenches) in warfare against his enemies, so too contemporary Muslims should be open to deploying unorthodox methods in modern-day warfare against their enemies.²⁰⁴

While it would be difficult to measure the extent of the influence of Bin Laden’s declarations on future Iraqi insurgents, his observations on the impending war could, at minimum, be considered perceptive. In a series of other statements about the Iraq War and the United States’ military operations there and in other parts of the majority-Muslim world, Bin Laden continued to encourage Islamists and others who were fighting the Americans, while expressing the same kind of justifications for their resistance against the Americans (based on his interpretation of the Quran and Hadith) as he had in the past.²⁰⁵

Multiple Muslim individuals and movements seem to have influenced Bin Laden’s ideas. Bin Laden’s ways of imagining Islamic history and applying his understanding of it to today’s events, together with his conceptions of such ideas as *jahiliyya*, jihad, and justifications for warfare, seem to have been influenced by Ibn Taymiyya and Sayyid Qutb, while his austere vision of the Islamic state seems to be influenced by the Wahhabi tradition. Several of these strands of thought have also been at work as Islamists in Pakistan

and Afghanistan – the subject of the next two chapters – have formulated, expressed, and applied their ideas. Bin Laden's death is unlikely to have a significant negative impact on al-Qaida's relative strength, because by design the organization is highly decentralized with leaders, cells, and affiliates throughout the world, who are backed by financing, a consistent religio-political ideology, and the desire to perpetuate attacks and continue expanding the organization.²⁰⁶

Wahhabism Multiplied

At least since the end of the Soviet war in Afghanistan in 1989, a new form of Wahhabism has come into existence, which is an anti-Saudi Wahhabi Islam as represented by such groups as al-Qaida and the Taliban; among many other goals, the Islamists who adhere to this form of Wahhabism would like to overthrow the Saudi government, and virtually every other government, and replace them with what the anti-Saudi Wahhabis believe to be genuinely Islamic governments.²⁰⁷ Two of the main grievances that the anti-Saudi Wahhabis have against the Saudi government are: (1) what the anti-Saudi Wahhabis believe to be that government's strong political and economic relations with Western countries, whose policies and cultures the anti-Saudi Wahhabis believe are utterly antithetical to Islam, and (2) the perceived gap between the rich and poor in Saudi Arabia, which the anti-Saudi Wahhabis believe exists in Saudi Arabian society largely because of what they believe to be the greed, corruption, and narcissism of most or all of the members of the Saudi political leadership.²⁰⁸ Yet, the Saudi Arabian government, through its religious, political, and financial support of such groups as the mujahideen, which gave rise to the Taliban and al-Qaida, was actually backing the very groups which desired and continue to desire to overthrow the Saudi government and almost all other governments in the majority-Muslim world.²⁰⁹

While Saudi Arabia's political leaders do not want the groups which they support to topple them, the Saudi government had at least three goals in supporting the mujahideen in Afghanistan. First, the Saudi government was strongly anti-Soviet, partly because the Soviet Union espoused an atheistic (and thus anti-Muslim) communist ideology with which the Saudis disagreed; in addition, the Saudis were political and economic allies of Western countries during the Cold War and had nothing to gain and much to lose if the Soviets had conquered Afghanistan or lands in any other part of the Middle East.²¹⁰ Second, the Saudis wanted to increase their own influence in the Middle East, while limiting that of other countries in the region, such as Iran.²¹¹ Third, in addition to its own economic and political interests, the Saudi government had the *ideal interest* (that is, an interest based on

principle) of wanting to protect the Muslims of Afghanistan from Soviet domination, which would have led to the Soviets placing substantial strictures on the Afghan Muslims' religious beliefs and practices.²¹² Related to the Saudi government's support of the mujahideen in Afghanistan is its historic and continued support of mosques, Islamic schools, other educational institutions, and social service agencies in many countries inside and outside of the majority-Muslim world.²¹³ While this use of soft power may help increase in modest ways the Saudi government's political and economic influence in some parts of the world, the members of that government have an ideal interest in supporting such religious and educational organizations because they believe that Islam is the truest and best religion. Partly as a result of that, they want to encourage other Muslims to share their beliefs, while nurturing them and hoping that their work will encourage non-Muslims to convert to Islam.²¹⁴

In any case, the Saudi government's support of the mujahideen, which led to the rise of al-Qaida and the Taliban, created blowback – that is, the transformation of former allies into active enemies – for the Saudi government. Many of the same Islamists whom the Saudi government supported during the Soviet war in Afghanistan turned against the Saudi political leadership.²¹⁵ The Saudi government has responded to this blowback through an accommodationalist/oppositionalist approach, which, among other characteristics, has involved attempts to accommodate – or show some flexibility toward – the Islamists who oppose them, on the one hand, and to oppose – or fight against – those very same Islamists, on the other.²¹⁶ One of the benefits that Saudi governmental leaders believe they may experience by appearing to accommodate the Islamists is that such accommodations *may* make the Saudi leaders *appear* to other Muslims as truly genuine in their Islam inasmuch as they *seem* to be supporting the very groups that oppose the West and Israel.²¹⁷ For example, there have been cases where, in speaking to Saudi citizens and other Muslims as target audiences, Saudi leaders have, at least subtly, suggested a level of empathy for some of the anti-Western and anti-Israeli ideology of certain Islamist groups.²¹⁸

The flip side of this intentionally contradictory accommodationalist/oppositionalist approach on the part of the Saudi government is its vehement opposition to the Islamists who oppose the Saudi government; indeed, some of these anti-Saudi Islamists operate within Saudi Arabia, while others operate outside of it.²¹⁹ Saudi Arabia is an authoritarian state with a powerful central government and active intelligence and law enforcement services that operate primarily inside and, to some extent, outside the country.²²⁰ During the history of modern Saudi Arabia, Saudi regimes have taken drastic steps to pre-empt, respond to, and/or punish any individuals or groups – including Islamists – who have engaged in speech or acts that may have been hostile to the Saudi government. The members of that government have

done almost everything in their power to suppress such groups and, at the same time, maintain what members of the Saudi government believe to be the security and stability of the Saudi state.²²¹

If the accommodationalist/oppositionalist policies and actions of the Saudi government with respect to Islamists seem confusing to some Western observers, it is because for the Saudi government this approach is intentionally contradictory; yet, it is precisely those often-simultaneous contradictions that, in the Saudi government's view, can best preserve its own interests. More specifically, the Saudi government is trying to satisfy competing interests with respect to at least two vital constituencies who often have contradictory viewpoints regarding the Islamists. One of these constituencies consists of Western and other industrialized countries (who utterly oppose the Islamists), to whom the Saudis sell enormous amounts of oil, making astronomical profits in the process.²²² The second constituency is comprised of Saudi and non-Saudi Muslims who may feel at least some empathy toward the Islamists and, at minimum, their pro-Palestinian and anti-Western ideals.²²³ To adapt a phrase, through its accommodationalist/oppositionalist approach, the Saudi government is playing both sides against the middle, with that government being in the middle, hoping it can benefit from its apparently clever and at times perilous strategy of survival and statecraft. At the same time, the Saudi government is not the only one in the majority-Muslim world which has engaged in an accommodationalist/oppositionalist strategy to serve its interests. Regimes in Pakistan have often used a similar strategy with respect to Islamist groups inside and outside that country, and it is to Pakistan that this study's attention turns.

Notes

- 1 Natana J. DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 17.
- 2 Ibid., 18.
- 3 Ibid., 18; Uthman ibn Bishr, *Unwan al-Majd fi Tarikh Najd*, vol. 1, ed. Abd al-Rahman bin Abd al-Latif bin Abd Allah Al al-Shaykh (Riyadh: Matbua'at Darat al-Malik Abd al-Aziz, 1982), 33.
- 4 DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam*, 18–19.
- 5 Ibid., 18–20.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., 21.
- 8 Ibid., 20; Ibn Bishr, *Unwan al-Majd fi Tarikh Najd*, vol. 1, 34–5.
- 9 DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam*, 21–2; Ibn Bishr, *Unwan al-Majd fi Tarikh Najd*, vol. 1, 6.
- 10 DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam*, 22; Ibn Bishr, *Unwan al-Majd fi Tarikh Najd*, vol. 1, 36.

- 11 DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam*, 22.
- 12 Ibid., 22–5.
- 13 Ibid., 22.
- 14 Ibid., 22–3; Ibn Bishr, *Unwan al-Majd fi Tarikh Najd*, vol. 1, 36.
- 15 DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam*, 23.
- 16 Ibid., 23–6.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid., 24–8; Husayn Ibn Ghannam, *Tarikh Najd*, 4th edn., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1994), 30–1.
- 19 DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam*, 29; Ibn Bishr, *Unwan al-Majd fi Tarikh Najd*, vol. 1, 39–40.
- 20 DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam*, 25.
- 21 According to a relevant Hadith, Muhammad stated, “Offer some of your prayers in your houses and do not make them at graves.” Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri, *Sahih Muslim, Being Traditions of the Sayings and Doings of the Prophet Muhammad as Narrated by his Companions*, 10th edn., vol. 1, trans. Abdul Hameed Siddiqui (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1994), 376.
- 22 DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam*, 25; Ibn Bishr, *Unwan al-Majd fi Tarikh Najd*, vol. 1, 39.
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Pakistan

Islamism in Pakistan and Islamism in Afghanistan are linked. During the latter half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, Islamist movements in Pakistan have had a profound influence on the ideologies, structures, and strategies of Islamist groups in Afghanistan, particularly the Taliban. This chapter provides an examination of certain strands of Islamism in Pakistan that had an effect on the Taliban and other Islamist groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Sayyid Abu'l A'la Mawdudi

One of the most influential modern figures in Islamism in Pakistan was the Sunni Muslim intellectual Sayyid Abu'l A'la Mawdudi (1903–79), who was the founder of one of Pakistan's largest Islamist groups, the Jama'at-i Islami.¹ Mawdudi's impact on Islamism in Pakistan and indirectly on the Taliban in Afghanistan was deep and far-reaching. Mawdudi was born in Awrangabad, India on September 25, 1903 and was descended from one of the most prominent branches of an extended family with strong ties to Sufism, a form of Islamic mysticism; this lineage was one important aspect of Mawdudi's claim to religious authority.²

Mawdudi's father attended the Islamic school (madrasah) at Aligarh in north India and was forced to leave it because his parents believed that the school had adopted too many British ideas and customs.³ Sayyid Abu'l A'la Mawdudi's home life was characterized by his parents' emphasis on teaching him the Quran, a notable factor since much of Mawdudi's preaching, writing, and activism was based on his extensive knowledge of that sacred text.⁴

Mawdudi on the Quran

In 1921, Mawdudi began studying classic areas within Islam (including the Quran, Quranic interpretation, the Hadith, law, logic, theology, and literature) in Delhi under the Islamic scholar, Mawlana 'Abdu'ssalam Niyazi, who promulgated a strict interpretive stance, leaving little room for alternative opinions.⁵ This lack of openness to alternative viewpoints came to characterize Mawdudi's approach to the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic history.⁶ During the 1920s and 1930s, Mawdudi expressed his Islamist views and his opposition to British colonialist rule in South Asia through magazines, pamphlets, books, and lectures, which were written in a clear and direct style that appealed to a mass audience of Muslims.⁷ In 1941, he founded the Jama'at-i Islami and played a major role in the movement's leadership until his death in 1979.⁸

Mawdudi's views on the Quran, Islamic history, and Sharia as well as his vision for Islam in the modern world had a substantial influence on Jama'at-i Islami and Islamism in general. In terms of the Quran, Mawdudi believed that with the proper faith in God and a strong education in the Quran and Islam, a Muslim could understand the Quran's "plain meaning" and apply it correctly to one's life and, ideally, to society.⁹ Mawdudi indicated that in all of his writings he tried to express "as faithfully as possible" the meaning which the Quran conveys.¹⁰ He believed that the Quran contains the complete and perfect revelation for all human beings at all times and that its single true meaning would become obvious to those who sincerely sought to understand it.

Mawdudi maintained that the Quran emphasized four related concepts, *ila* (divinity), *rabb* (lord), *'ibada* (worship), and *din* (religion).¹¹ Mawdudi argued that these four terms could guide one in attempting to understand the Quran's essential meaning. The concepts *ila* and *rabb* are supposed to be understood in terms of God's characteristics, while *'ibada* and *din* are to be understood in terms of the duties which faithful Muslims must perform.¹²

Ila, among other things, refers to God's holiness, sacredness, purity, and separateness from human beings, while *rabb* refers to God's oneness (*tawhid*) and his complete sovereignty over the entire universe.¹³ Linked to these two terms are *'ibada*, which relates to the proper rituals done in obedience to God (such as offering the daily prayers, making the pilgrimage to Mecca, eating in accordance with Islamic dietary regulations, etc.), and *din*, which Mawdudi defines as the *totality* of the entire Muslim community's obligations, including, but not limited to, the establishment of an Islamic state under Sharia.¹⁴ Thus, for Mawdudi the Quran is to be the guide for Muslims' personal and communal devotion to God; it also provides clear injunctions for the establishment of Sharia and the proper structure of an Islamic state, since for him Islam made no distinction between the religious and political realms.¹⁵

The Quran, Mawdudi argued, was not only supposed to be recited, and reflected upon, but Muslims were to read and understand it at face value and implement its teachings. Since the Quran explained the “ultimate causes of man’s successes [and] failures,” if Muslims properly implemented its teachings, they would be able to solve their social, political, and cultural maladies.¹⁶

Mawdudi on Islamic History

Mawdudi’s understanding of Islam’s history is dualistic. In the words of Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, “[t]he lines of demarcation that defined Islam [for Mawdudi] were perforce steadfast: there was either Islam, as it was understood and defined by Mawdudi, or there was un-Islam.”¹⁷ For example, Mawdudi believed that there has been one period in Islamic history which has embodied “true Islam” and that was the period of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided caliphs in the seventh century.¹⁸ After that initial golden period, “three-quarters” of Islam became defective and incorrect. Mawdudi does not specify which three-quarters came to represent “un-Islam.”¹⁹

This very long and deleterious phase within Islamic history (which has lasted, with a few exceptions, until the present time) was comprised of several characteristics: ignorance (or *jahiliyya*), atheism, and polytheism, all of which Mawdudi believed were utterly antithetical to Islam. The ignorance which pervaded much of Islamic history took many forms and in one of its forms it *appeared* to profess belief in the Unity of God and Prophethood, to perform pious acts of fasting and praying, and to show an eagerness to refer disputes to the Quran and Sunna.²⁰ Thus, during the period of ignorance in Islamic history, the ignorant people who claimed to be Muslim often had beliefs and engaged in acts which projected the *illusion* that they were Muslim, while, in Mawdudi’s view, they were not. The combining of Islam and un-Islam in the same body politic, as a result of this ignorance, gave rise to great complications. Atheism took the form of people submitting to the authority of “kings” (probably a reference to the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs of the seventh through thirteenth centuries) and the emergence of various forms of philosophy and theology which resulted in unimportant hair-splitting and “the creation of a number of new sects.”²¹

While Mawdudi does not name these sects, he may have had in mind such groups as the Mu’tazilites, Twelver Shiites, Ismailis, Zaydis, and others who varied from Mawdudi’s strict view of Sunni Islam. For Mawdudi, polytheism primarily took the form of people worshipping saints’ tombs and confusing these saints for deities.²² In terms of Mawdudi’s rejection of saint worship, polytheism, and several ideas pertaining to the “purity” of Sunni Islam, his views were possibly influenced by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab.²³

Although for Mawdudi much of Islamic history was marked by corrupt and disdainful un-Islamic beliefs and practices, there were certain individuals whose ideas represented “true Islam.” These *mujaddids* or “renewers” of the religion included the founders of the four schools of Sunni law, the medieval Muslim philosophers and legists al-Ghazzali and Ibn Taymiyya and the modern Muslim reformers Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah. All of these great *mujaddids* were distinguished for their insight into problems which Muslims faced, for their reform of religious practices, for initiating an intellectual revolution, for defending Islam in the political sphere, for establishing the primacy of the Sharia, and for their opposition to the self-proclaimed orthodoxy of the ulema.²⁴ Based in part on his interpretations of the Quran, Islamic history, and Sharia, Mawdudi developed his vision for Islam in the modern world. One significant aspect of Mawdudi’s ideas for Islam in the modern world relates to his conception of the Islamic state.

Mawdudi’s Vision of the Islamic State

One feature of Mawdudi’s vision for such a state is that he does not view it as being democratic. In his writings, he intentionally de-emphasizes the role of free elections. He maintains that God has absolute sovereignty within a Muslim polity and that the emir (as the chief executive would be called) should be given the primary responsibility of acting as God’s vice-regent on earth and enforcing Sharia in this capacity.²⁵ He places great emphasis on the absolute authority of the emir, and of the Islamic state.²⁶ Mawdudi also conceives of this Islamic state as having a legislature and judiciary and their functions would be limited to advising the emir, who would be vested with an enormous amount of power so as to apply God’s sovereign law in the earthly realm.²⁷

Mawdudi states that the emir should be selected by public acclamation but, at the same time, he discourages the idea of free elections.²⁸ For Mawdudi, one basis for determining the authenticity and authority of the emir is the extent to which his rule and decrees embody the essential teachings of the Sharia. He argues that the selection of the emir “albeit divorced from a free electoral process would provide a democratic state whose continuity would be guaranteed by a sacrosanct code of law which by definition was just and therefore required obedience.”²⁹

Mawdudi argued that there were many examples throughout history which demonstrated that the will of the people contradicted Sharia and the sovereignty of God and, for him, one of the most salient instances of this was the secular government of Pakistan, which was in existence during Mawdudi’s lifetime. One way to help assure the implementation of Sharia in its most complete form was by vesting the emir with great power and avoiding electioneering in the process of his selection.³⁰ In addition to criticizing free

election of leaders as a viable mechanism for selecting individuals for political office in an Islamic state, Mawdudi emphasizes that the emir and the state's political apparatus must reserve the right to use coercive powers in order to maintain order and suppress the possibility of chaos or *fitnah*.³¹ There seems to be a bit of confusion and vagueness on Mawdudi's part when it comes to his ideas related to the selection of an emir.

There are at least two reasons that Mawdudi is pro-authoritarian and anti-democratic. First, he believes that the Prophet Muhammad ruled the early Islamic community in a manner that was fair yet authoritarian. He maintains that while Muhammad was just, the Quran and Hadith convey the idea that Muhammad was the absolute final arbiter and that during the Prophet's time there was no precedent for or appeal to a democratic process. Mawdudi believes that the Quran, Hadith, and Sharia (as properly formulated) contain one set of monolithic injunctions that are relevant for all times and places. These injunctions are clear and self-evident and it is the task of the emir and his Islamic government to understand these injunctions and implement them decisively and comprehensively.³²

Second, Mawdudi was suspicious of democracy because he believed that during the colonial era the British had used a democratic system of government to favor the Hindus over the Muslims in British India.³³ Related to this perception, before the partition of India and Pakistan, Mawdudi believed that if democracy became the system of government in India, it would *ipso facto* benefit the Hindus since there were more Hindus than Muslims in that country.³⁴ Even after partition in 1947, one of the factors which discouraged Mawdudi from favoring democracy was his fear that a democratic system in Pakistan would give religious minorities and "wrongheaded Muslims" too much power in terms of directing the affairs of an Islamic state, which would be separated from the rest of India.³⁵ The power of leading an Islamic state, in Mawdudi's view, should be given to a powerful emir who fully understands the Sharia and knows how to implement it.³⁶

Mawdudi on Gender Roles in an Islamic State

Another aspect of the Islamic state which is important in Mawdudi's thought relates to the role of women and men. Mawdudi maintains, on the basis of various passages in the Quran and Hadith, that men have a "natural superiority" over women and that they are a "degree above women."³⁷ This presupposition serves to shape much of Mawdudi's viewpoint on the role of women in Islam. He advocates men working outside the home to earn money and women staying at home and taking care of the various aspects of the domestic sphere, which includes the task of raising children.³⁸ According to Mawdudi, wives are not only obligated to stay at home, but

they must ask their husband's permission to leave the domestic sphere, and a husband should only grant his wife this permission under special circumstances, such as when she wants to go to the mosque, on the hajj (or pilgrimage to Mecca), and attend funerals or visit graves.³⁹

Much like other Islamists in other contexts, Mawdudi takes a very traditional stance regarding the veiling of women. He interprets various passages in the Quran as meaning that women must veil themselves when they depart from home, but may leave their faces and hands uncovered if they wish.⁴⁰ According to Mawdudi, the extent to which men and women must cover themselves relates to the specific prescriptions regarding male and female forbidden parts or *satar*.⁴¹ The parts of a man which are considered forbidden and must be covered extend from the navel to the knee, and for a woman this forbidden area involves the entire body, except for her face and hands.⁴² Thus, both men and women must cover certain parts of their bodies, but Mawdudi maintains that there is simply some variation regarding the *degree* to which men's and women's bodies should be covered.⁴³ On the whole, Mawdudi's prescriptions regarding men's and women's dress are consistent with some of the most traditional Muslim ideas about these issues.

Mawdudi on the Process of Islamic Revolution

For Mawdudi, how can the ideal Islamic state come into existence? In short, he believes that such a state can be established through what he calls a "process of Islamic revolution."⁴⁴ Specifically, for him the primary model Muslims must follow in engaging in the revolutionary process is that of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, who created the first Islamic community, which, for Mawdudi, represents the best Islamic state.⁴⁵ Mawdudi believes the circumstances that modern Muslims face are, in some respects, similar to those which Muhammad confronted in the seventh century.⁴⁶ For example, much as Muhammad was encircled on all sides by enemies, who had their own visions of an ideal state (which contradicted Islam) and who wanted to destroy Islam, so too modern Muslims are surrounded by enemies who have their own visions of an ideal state and seek to destroy true Muslims in the modern period.⁴⁷ Modern enemies of Islam espouse notions of the ideal state which involve principles related to fascism, nationalism, democracy, Marxism, communism, socialism, totalitarianism, and secularism.⁴⁸ These and other modern enemies of Islam seek to convince Muslims and others of the supremacy of their beliefs over those of Muslims. These enemies of Islam also want to use their ideologies as one method of oppressing Muslims or hindering the true Islamic states they may attempt to create.⁴⁹ Mawdudi states that modern Muslims must realize the tangible threats they face and

they should find encouragement in the idea that Muhammad encountered similar obstacles and, with God's favor, overcame them.

In addition to God's favor, another compelling factor that enabled the early Muslims to establish a genuine and long-lasting Islamic community was the "fact" – in Mawdudi's view – that many pious, heroic, and truth-minded people joined Muhammad's movement in order to aid in the defense and propagation of Islam.⁵⁰ So too, for Mawdudi, in the modern world truly committed, pious, and courageous Muslims must join the Islamic revolutionary movement, which will lead to the establishment of a "true Islamic state."⁵¹ In discussing this revolutionary process, Mawdudi believed that Pakistan should be the first country to benefit from a truly Islamic state and that the Islamic revolutionary process should spread throughout the world. According to Mawdudi, another essential virtue of the early Muslims, who surrounded Muhammad, was that they were utterly committed to the great truth of Islam, which, in addition to their unyielding faith and constant prayer, enabled them to tolerate overwhelming hardship and find triumph against their enemies.⁵² Mawdudi believed that as this triumph against the enemies of early Islam became secure, a large number of pious Muslim "workers" were trained to "perform any task that [they] were called upon to undertake in the capacity of a Muslim."⁵³ According to Mawdudi, while Muhammad "guided the affairs of the state" in Medina, he "trained thousands of men to perfection in running every department of government in the Islamic manner."⁵⁴

For Mawdudi, as Muhammad engaged in these tasks, he strengthened Islam and laid the groundwork for Islam's continued expansion and institutionalization after his death.⁵⁵ Through these and other means, Muhammad initiated a long-lasting "bloodless revolution" against virtually all non-Muslim entities, including polytheism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism.⁵⁶ For Mawdudi, that Islamic revolution was comprehensive in that it changed people's modes of living, spiritual values, and every other aspect of their lives.⁵⁷

Mawdudi believes that modern Muslims must follow the model of Muhammad and the early Islamic community as they perpetuate modern-day Islamic revolutions. This process involves, in part, educating people in the true Islam, showing them the weaknesses of non-Islamic states, instructing them in the ways of physical revolution against non-Islamic states, and training certain people to lead every aspect of government in an Islamic manner after the Islamic revolution succeeds.⁵⁸ Mawdudi expresses his hope that this revolutionary transformation of society could be – at least in part – "bloodless."⁵⁹ In describing the ways in which the Arabian peninsula was changed by Muhammad and the early Islamic community, Mawdudi states that they were "transformed as if by a magic touch."⁶⁰ Mawdudi is suggesting that this magic touch was constituted by God's power together with the persuasive influence of the Quran and Muhammad's powerful preaching and example.⁶¹ For Mawdudi, God's power continues to be at

work in the modern world and one of several ways that modern Muslims can facilitate the “magic touch” of a bloodless revolution in the world today is by preaching the message of the Quran, the Hadith, and the Prophet and enabling its truth to reach people in such a way that they mobilize themselves to transform society so that it becomes “truly Islamic.”⁶²

Mawdudi did not view violence as a justifiable means of spreading Islam or of perpetrating an Islamic revolution. According to him, physical jihad should not be used for the spread of Islam.⁶³ For Mawdudi, the purpose of jihad is to combat injustice and tyranny and to restore a situation of liberty and equality that is in accordance with the Quran and Hadith. In his view, there are a variety of social and political systems that human beings have instituted – such as monarchy, democracy, communism, and secularism, to name a few – which have created injustice and have supplanted Islam which, in Mawdudi’s view, constitutes the best religious, political, and social system. For Mawdudi, Islam constitutes the proper challenge to humanly-constructed systems, which are inherently tyrannical, because Islam demands freedom and liberation for everyone in the world.⁶⁴ According to Mawdudi, in addition to using peaceful forms of jihad to resist injustice, tyranny, and corruption, Muslims must use peaceful jihad to assist the poor and weak. This peaceful jihad would involve working in a non-violent way to help the poor and weak, so that their economic conditions could be improved, while educating them in the true Islam.

The Jama‘at-i Islami of Pakistan in the 1940s

Mawdudi attempted to implement his Islamic ideals in the Jama‘at-i Islami, which he established in India in 1941, six years before the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. In establishing the Jama‘at, Mawdudi viewed himself and his organization as having two major opponents: first, India’s Congress Party, which was largely secularist and which Mawdudi believed favored the interests of Hindus and non-Muslims over those of Muslims, and second, the Muslim League, which worked vigilantly toward the establishment of Pakistan as a majority-Muslim state and which Mawdudi believed was too secular and not fully committed to Islamic principles. Mawdudi established the Jama‘at as a rival to the Muslim League for the leadership of the movement to establish a majority-Muslim state in the form of Pakistan.⁶⁵

As Mawdudi called on India’s Muslims to join his organization which he believed was fully committed to the full scope of Islamic principles, several influential members of India’s ulema joined the Jama‘at.⁶⁶ In 1941, the 75 founding members of the organization elected Mawdudi as its first President (emir) and Mawdudi served in that position until 1971. In that inaugural meeting, the members also ratified the Jama‘at’s constitution. The organization

then established its base of operations in Pathankot, a town in the Punjab, which is in northern India. Pathankot's relative geographic isolation enabled the members of the Jama'at to unify and strengthen their organization without being overly concerned about threats from their detractors.⁶⁷ Between 1941 and 1947, the Jama'at spread its Islamist message to Muslims and others in India through its education campaign, distributing literature, speeches, sermons, rallies, and work in a variety of mosques in India.⁶⁸

After the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, Mawdudi and several other original members of the Jama'at left India for the newly-created state of Pakistan and established a base of operations for the organization in the city of Lahore. Fairly soon after moving to Lahore, the Jama'at moved away from the isolation of the earlier period when it was based in Pathankot and members of the organization made exhaustive efforts to influence Pakistani politics more broadly. Mawdudi's Islamist vision of Islam continued to form the organization's intellectual foundation. The Jama'at influenced many members of Pakistan's population and some in powerful political positions in Pakistan's burgeoning government.

After the partition of India in 1947, which created the modern state of Pakistan, the citizens of this new majority-Muslim nation confronted a situation where there were enormous schisms in its polity; ethnic, class, and religious conflicts; painful frictions between groups which favored military rule and those which favored democratic rule; and Pakistan's political and emerging cultural separation from Muslims who remained in India. This was the turbulent environment in which the Jama'at grew and gained strength. Within these tumultuous circumstances, the members of the Jama'at preached a clear, formulaic, and easy-to-understand message which, from the perspective of its membership, manifested a persuasive and permanent remedy to all of Pakistan's problems – namely, that Islam was the solution.

The Jama'at-i Islami's Strategy

The Jama'at's method of spreading its message and increasing its membership was at least two-pronged. First, the organization engaged in grassroots efforts among the masses of Pakistanis, using mosques as one forum for teaching people the Quran, the Hadith, the life of the Prophet, and many of the most important beliefs and practices of Islam. During this period of the Jama'at's expansion and during subsequent periods as well, literacy programs were a crucial aspect of the Jama'at's work. One reason for the emphasis on literacy was because of the high illiteracy rate among Pakistanis and literacy is a vital skill for people who desire to gain greater levels of knowledge about Islam's beliefs and practices. Indeed, these programs were attractive not only because literacy could enable Pakistanis to grow in their faith and

expand their knowledge of Islam, but also because literacy could play an important role in increasing educational and job opportunities, while potentially catalyzing upward social mobility.⁶⁹

In addition to literacy programs, the Jama'at sponsored a wide variety of social services, which they believed were fully consistent with Islamic ideals of generosity and mercy and which helped promote the Jama'at's Islamic beliefs and practices among Pakistanis. Other social service programs which the Jama'at sponsored included hospitals and medical services for the underprivileged, orphanages, unemployment benefits, food pantries, and efforts to prevent violence and crime in certain lower-income neighborhoods. The Jama'at's understanding of Islam catalyzed its members' efforts in these areas, while they hoped that these endeavors would increase the Jama'at's numbers while strengthening the Islamic faith of the people whose lives the organization touched.⁷⁰

The second prong of the Jama'at's strategy, which was related to the first, was the organization's mobilization as a political party. For example, Mawdudi and other members of the organization attempted to cooperate with certain members of Pakistan's ulema in trying to establish an Islamic constitution for the country. The Jama'at's religious and political ideas played an influential role in the debates between that organization and the Pakistani government, particularly between 1947 and 1956. One of the times that the Jama'at's influence was most evident was in the implementation of its ideas in the Objectives Resolution of 1949. This resolution stated a crucial set of principles with respect to Pakistan's constitution, which was in a formative stage at that point.⁷¹ The government's acceptance of the resolution constituted its commitment to Islamize Pakistan's constitution and laws in a manner that was largely consistent with the Jama'at's vision for Islam in that country.⁷²

One of several significant aspects of this resolution is that it requires the government to be responsible for the Islamizing of Pakistani laws and the Pakistani state.⁷³ In other words, this process would not be the sole responsibility of the Jama'at, although, in principle, the Jama'at and organizations like it could continue to operate freely. At the same time, there were numerous examples in Pakistan's history when the government violated this principle and prohibited the Jama'at and other Islamist organizations from working freely within Pakistan.⁷⁴

In sum, the passage of this Resolution and its integration into Pakistan's constitution signified a major victory for the Jama'at in that it required Pakistan to evolve into an Islamic state, if the government actually implemented the ideals articulated in the Resolution of 1949. Although on numerous occasions during Pakistan's history the government did not adhere to this requirement, the Resolution provided the Jama'at with a substantial basis for opposing what its members often believed were the government's anti-Islamic policies and actions.⁷⁵

The Jama'at-i Islami and Kashmir

Another strong and public stance the Jama'at took during this period related to Kashmir, which is a territory with a substantial Muslim population which India and Pakistan have strongly contested since Pakistan's independence in 1947. In 1948, while the Pakistani government claimed to be observing a cease-fire with India, the Pakistani government continued to support strongly an anti-India insurgency in Kashmir. The anti-India insurgents in Kashmir utilized their interpretation of jihad to justify their military actions and to encourage new members to join their organization. These insurgents also used their interpretation of jihad to garner finances and arms for their organization.⁷⁶

Mawdudi strongly opposed these insurgent groups, stating that not just any group that desired to do so could simply proclaim jihad against its enemies. According to Mawdudi, this kind of declaration of jihad on the part of individual groups constituted an un-Islamic (and, thus, unjustifiable) arrogation of authority on the part of such groups. Rather, for Mawdudi, the declaration of jihad fell largely under the authority of central governments, which had at their disposal scholars of Islam who had carefully studied the Quran, Hadith, other Islamic sources and the situation at hand, and made a deliberate and thoughtful decision as to whether the declaration of jihad was justified. In the case of the Kashmiri insurgent groups' declaration of jihad, they themselves did not lead or represent a central government, nor was their declaration based on Muslim scholars' careful analysis of the sources or the current situation. Mawdudi's interpretation of the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic history led him to a strong resistance against the ad hoc declaration of jihad by renegade groups. He believed that such declarations could cause a splintering among Muslims and would enable unlearned and power-hungry people to create chaos.⁷⁷

With these and other principles in mind, Mawdudi declared that the Pakistani government should either formally go to war with India over Kashmir or adhere to the stipulations of the cease-fire to which the Pakistani government had already agreed. Mawdudi's critique against the Pakistani government's policy toward the insurgents in Kashmir carried two implicit messages. First, the Pakistani government, because it was based on largely secular principles, did not have the *Islamic legitimacy* to declare a jihad against the pro-Indian forces in Kashmir. Second, the kind of government which the Jama'at propounded would have that legitimacy, because, in Mawdudi's view, it would have been wholly based on Islamic law and would have had the kind of Muslim scholars who could have made a fully justified and authentic declaration of jihad.⁷⁸

For its part, the Pakistani government attempted to use Mawdudi's apparent opposition to the Pakistani-supported insurgents in Kashmir to its

advantage. Pakistani government officials accused the Jama'at of pro-Indian sympathies and anti-Pakistani endeavors. Based on these suspicions, the government imprisoned Mawdudi and a large number of other members of the Jama'at, declaring the organization seditious and similar to communist parties (which the Jama'at vehemently opposed) in its potential to undermine the state and national security. The Pakistani government's imprisonment of Mawdudi and other members of the Jama'at indicated that it felt threatened by the Jama'at's public denouncements of its policy in Kashmir. This sequence of events reinforced the Jama'at's role in religious and political discourse in Pakistan and increased the attention the government gave to the Jama'at and other Islamist groups. These events also increased those groups' potential to influence religious and political debates in Pakistan. Pakistan's government was not able to abolish the Jama'at nor was the government successful in removing it or other Islamist groups from influencing politics in the country. Indeed, while Mawdudi was in prison, he continued his religious and political work, influencing a large number of leaders and other Pakistanis in an attempt to move Pakistan closer to the Jama'at's Islamist vision for Pakistan. Mawdudi's imprisonment, partly because it demonstrated his commitment to his Islamist principles and his opposition to the Pakistani government, increased his already prominent stature among many Islamists in Pakistan.⁷⁹

The Jama'at-i Islami and Ayub Khan

Mawdudi was freed from prison in 1950 and the next major set of events related to the Jama'at involved it using its increasing influence to exert pressure on the government with respect to the constitution of 1956. Two of the Jama'at's and other Islamists' demands to which the government acceded and which appeared in the constitution included naming the state the "Islamic Republic of Pakistan" and the establishment of the "repugnancy clause." This clause stipulated that no laws could be passed that were repugnant to the teachings of the Quran and Hadith and that all of Pakistan's laws that had been passed until that time could be investigated by Muslim authorities and, if necessary, repealed.⁸⁰ Mawdudi and the Jama'at quickly accepted the constitution as Islamic and declared yet another victory with respect to what they considered to be Pakistan's overly secular government.⁸¹

Yet, the military coup in 1958 which enabled General Muhammad Ayub Khan to become Pakistan's President created a situation which hindered the Jama'at from influencing Pakistan's laws. President Ayub Khan's modernizing agenda intentionally attempted to block the Jama'at and other Islamists from influencing politics in Pakistan. As Ayub Khan's regime worked to increase its influence, the Jama'at faced a political establishment that was far

less willing to bend to pressure from the Islamists and far more willing to exert pressure on them. The Ayub Khan administration's move away from integrating Islamist principles with the state's ideology and laws caused a tangible loosening of the Jama'at from the apparatus of the state. As the Pakistani state took a more hostile approach to the Jama'at, an approach that was increasingly effective, Mawdudi worked hard to prevent the Jama'at from radicalizing, as, for example, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood had done, and incurred President Nasser's wrath in the process.⁸² The job of maintaining the strength and unity of the Jama'at, while preventing it from radicalizing in the face of steady government opposition, was enormously difficult for Mawdudi, who wrote, "We put up with [Pakistani President] Ayub [which is "Job" in Urdu] with the patience of Ayub [Job]."⁸³

Throughout the period of Ayub's rule, the Jama'at continued in its efforts to Islamize Pakistan's constitution and its laws, incurring steadfast governmental opposition. However, Ayub Khan was far too clever to oppose the Jama'at's Islamist goals with secularism alone. Rather, Ayub Khan coopted and adapted liberal Islamic principles (or Islamic modernism) as a way of gaining popular approval for his government and its policies. For example, in a speech to Pakistan's ulema in May 1959, Ayub Khan stated that Pakistan and the ulema must rid themselves of the forms of Islam which block progress (which implied the Jama'at's form of Islamism for example), and interpret religion in ways that promoted the country's progress and fought communism.⁸⁴ During the period from approximately 1958 until 1968, Pakistan's governmental leaders, including Ayub Khan, promoted Islamic modernism as a way of attempting to block groups such as the Jama'at-i Islami from Islamizing the country. Islamist groups were forced to retreat from many of their efforts in the face of the government's relative success in combating them. The Pakistani government closed the offices of the Jama'at and related organizations. It also denounced the Jama'at in many of its publications and it restricted almost all of the Jama'at's endeavors.⁸⁵

The government imprisoned Mawdudi twice during Ayub Khan's presidency. As Ayub Khan's government increasingly restricted the Jama'at's work, the Jama'at placed a higher priority on removing Ayub Khan from power and on creating an environment in Pakistan that would be conducive to its Islamist objectives.⁸⁶ Thus, during the 1960s the Jama'at attempted to build coalitions with non-Islamist parties in Pakistan which may have agreed with at least a few of the Jama'at's policies. In general, the Jama'at found agreement with non-Islamist parties on such principles as the removal of Ayub Khan's military government from power and the restoration of democracy in Pakistan. Indeed, in 1965 the Jama'at supported the presidential candidacy of Fatimah Jinnah, who was the sister of the first Governor-General of Pakistan after Pakistani independence, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. This move by the Jama'at could be considered particularly unusual given the

fact that the Jama'at stood strongly in favor of the principle that only men, specifically Muslim men, should hold political office. Yet, at the same time, the Jama'at's support of Fatimah Jinnah could be viewed as an example of its pragmatism and the lengths it would go – even to the point of contradicting crucial aspects of its own ideology – in its attempt to remove Ayub Khan from power. Thus, during Ayub Khan's presidency, the Jama'at functioned, in some ways, like a typical political party.⁸⁷

Some of the results of this change in the status of the Jama'at, from being primarily a resistance organization to being a political party, became all the more obvious in the period after Ayub's presidency, which ended in 1969. In 1970, the Jama'at took part in elections with the hope of claiming power. In spite of vigorous campaigning on the part of various candidates who were members of the Jama'at, the party won only four seats in Pakistan's National Assembly and four seats in some provincial assemblies in the country at large.⁸⁸ In 1971, the Jama'at responded to the possibility of civil war in East Pakistan by activating itself in support of Pakistan's central government and by participating in that government's unsuccessful attempt to prevent East Pakistan from seceding as Bangladesh.⁸⁹

The Jama'at-i Islami, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Muhammad Zia ul-Haq

The secession of East Pakistan, the establishment of Bangladesh as an independent country, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto becoming President of Pakistan in 1971 increasingly catalyzed the Jama'at's political activity. One factor that spurred the Jama'at's efforts was the Pakistan People's Party's largely secularist, socialist, and nationalist ideology. Viewing Bhutto's political orientation as utterly antithetical to its Islamist principles, the Jama'at led a religious and political movement that intentionally appealed to Pakistanis' Muslim sensibilities in its attempts to weaken Bhutto's regime.⁹⁰ While the Jama'at's opposition to Ayub had enabled Islamist groups and groups with Islamist leanings to form a coalition resisting his presidency, opposition to Bhutto was solidified with Islam as the guiding principle.⁹¹ The Jama'at's Islamist vision played a major role in consolidating the pro-Islamist and anti-Bhutto alliance, as the Jama'at and its coalition partners engaged in a nationwide grassroots resistance to Bhutto's government. The Jama'at's leadership in the opposition to Bhutto gave it increased popularity in much of Pakistan during this period. In the election of 1977, which is often believed to be an election where fraudulent means were used to favor Bhutto and his allies, the Jama'at won nine of the 36 parliamentary seats won by the opposition.⁹² During the anti-government protests which followed the elections, the Jama'at became even more popular. In this period,

the Jama'at, using its extensive grassroots networks in much of Pakistan, led protests which eventually severely weakened Bhutto, whose presidency ended in 1973.⁹³ Later, the Jama'at's activism created the environment for a military coup d'état in Pakistan in 1977.⁹⁴

General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq seized power from President Bhutto in a bloodless coup on July 5, 1977, and became Pakistan's chief martial-law administrator while retaining his position as the Pakistani Army's Chief of Staff. As Zia came to power, many Islamists, including members of the Jama'at, began to gain the impression that even though they might not be senior partners in Zia's government, they could potentially operate in a favorable political environment and benefit from some governmental support. The strong ideological relationship between Zia's government and the Jama'at produced what one member of the Jama'at called "a mother-daughter relationship" between those two entities.⁹⁵ Zia hoped to buttress the power of his government by incorporating Islamist parties, such as the Jama'at, into his regime in such a way that he could maximize his influence on them. Thus, through this eventually failed strategy of making these Islamist parties his allies instead of his opponents, he tried to neutralize their influence. In this process of attempted accommodation, Zia incorporated the demands of the Jama'at and other Islamist parties into state ideology, thereby offering the Islamist parties a power-sharing arrangement in which the state would act as the senior partner, while the Islamist parties would benefit from the government's support and be able to engage in a limited amount of political work. This strategy had circumscribed short-term success because it appealed to the Jama'at's and other Islamists' desire to spread their ideas. However, this strategy failed in the long term because it contradicted the Islamists' goal of eventually completely Islamizing the whole of Pakistan. As this contradiction became increasingly noticeable to the Jama'at and other Islamists, and as other factors came into play, the political alliance between the Islamists, including the Jama'at, and Zia's regime unraveled.⁹⁶

Yet, before the coalition between the Jama'at and Zia's regime was formalized, there were several policy areas where the Zia regime and the Jama'at cooperated. For example, the Jama'at and Zia's regime cooperated in a comprehensive Islamization program within Pakistan which was introduced in February 1979 with the establishment of Islamic laws related to taxation and severe Islamic punishments for violations of codes which the Islamists interpreted as existing in the Quran, Hadith, and example of the Prophet. The Jama'at asserted that these new laws were the positive results of its continuing efforts to establish Islamic law in Pakistan. However, Islamization created friction between the Zia regime and the Jama'at because while both sides supported the general idea of Islamization, over time they disagreed on the actual content of it.⁹⁷

The Jama'at-i Islami, Zia, and Afghanistan

While the Jama'at and Zia's government may have disagreed on certain aspects of domestic policy, they largely agreed on Pakistan's policy on Afghanistan, particularly after the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, which began in December 1979. For example, after the Soviet invasion of that country the Jama'at played a significant role in generating support among many Pakistanis for the efforts of the Jama'at and other Islamist groups in supporting the mujahideen, which was a large group of Afghan and non-Afghan Muslims who fought the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan from the time the invasion began until it ended in 1989. Soon after the Soviet military entered Afghanistan, Zia tried to strengthen his ties with the Jama'at and consulted with them on his Afghan policy so as to give the Pakistani public the impression that his government and the Jama'at were united in their opposition to the Soviet invasion, which in large part they were. Zia and the Jama'at also declared that the war in which the mujahideen and other Islamist forces were engaging against "the atheistic and anti-Islamic Soviets" was a physical jihad.⁹⁸

This coalition between Zia and the Jama'at was beneficial to both sides, especially to the Jama'at in that it established a close relationship between the Jama'at, on the one hand, and the Pakistani Army and security forces, on the other, while opening the upper levels of the Pakistani government to the Jama'at and its influence. This cooperative arrangement also gave the Jama'at an integral role in the flow of money and arms to the mujahideen. During this period, the Jama'at also used its close relationship with the Pakistani government as a way of providing the members of its organization, who so desired, military training and direct combat experience in Afghanistan.⁹⁹

Through these avenues, the Jama'at influenced – with its Islamist ideology – the mujahideen and Afghan refugees both inside and outside of Afghanistan, beginning in the 1980s. The Jama'at's impact on at least some Afghan refugees increased its positive reputation among Islamists in much of the majority-Muslim world and gave many Muslims throughout the world the impression that the Jama'at was concerned about the welfare of Muslims inside and outside of Pakistan. The Jama'at's active support of the mujahideen benefited Zia because he could utilize that organization for a foreign policy objective, namely ousting the Soviets from Afghanistan, while partially diverting the Jama'at from influencing domestic politics. At the same time, the Jama'at used its support of the mujahideen as one way of justifying and sustaining its close ties with Zia's regime. The Jama'at's leaders and others within the organization interpreted its relationship with Zia's government and its support of the mujahideen as beneficial because they seemed to increase the party's power.¹⁰⁰

By 1984, because of the Zia government's ban on student protests within Pakistan – many of which were in favor of the Jama'at and other Islamist groups – and what increasing numbers of the Jama'at's members believed were only partially effectual Islamization measures on the part of the government, the Jama'at began to distance itself from the Zia government. Concomitantly, the Jama'at's relatively weak showing – when compared to other potential allies of Zia's government – in the parliamentary elections in 1985 convinced Zia that it was no longer necessary for him to seek the support of the Jama'at, furthering the rift between the Jama'at and Zia's government. The Jama'at's relationship with Zia's administration had the effect of tarnishing its Islamist credentials in the sense that there were hardline Islamists inside and outside of the Jama'at who opposed that party's alliance with Zia because they believed that the party had made too many compromises of its ideals in order to accommodate many of Zia's secularist ideas and self-interested political goals.¹⁰¹ As Zia's popularity declined among many Pakistanis, so too did that of the Jama'at. One way the party's weakness manifested itself was in its diminished showings in the national elections of 1988, 1990, and 1993.¹⁰²

In spite of the Jama'at's relatively poor electoral results, by the end of the presidency of Zia, who died in a plane crash in 1988, the Jama'at had become a powerful religious and political force domestically and internationally, with a palpable influence on Pakistan's society and culture. The Jama'at maintained this influence because of its strong, largely grassroots configuration and its ability to utilize Islam in such a way as to affect some of Pakistan's governmental policies. Within Pakistan, the Jama'at continues to be a significant organization which can influence various aspects of Pakistan's political life through its strong organizational structure.

During its history, the Jama'at has had four leaders: Sayyid Abu'l A'la Mawdudi, who led the group from 1941 until 1972; Mian Tufail Muhammad, who led the group from 1972 until 1987; Qazi Hussain Ahmad, who led the group from 1987 until 2009; and Munawar Hassan who began leading the group in 2009.¹⁰³ During the various periods when these leaders were at its helm, differing groups comprised the Jama'at's socio-political base. Some of the categories that have been part of the Jama'at's base include the urban middle classes, business owners, Muhajirs, who are Muslims who moved from India to live permanently in Pakistan during and soon after Pakistan became independent of India in 1947, significant numbers of Punjabis, and Pashtuns. Over the years, the Jama'at has also attempted to strengthen its relationship with students, Pakistan's current and prospective politicians, government workers, scholars, and intellectuals. One of the reasons that the organization has been able to make lasting inroads within Pakistan's government is because of the ways in which it has incorporated university students into its fold, teaching them its understanding of Islamic

tenets and piety in such a way that has shaped these people's faith and practice, while fostering their loyalty to the Jama'at. This grassroots bottom-up strategy also exemplifies Mawdudi's emphasis on utilizing Islamic education and group-building as crucial methods in his and the Jama'at's efforts in Islamizing Pakistani society.¹⁰⁴

Islamist Symmetries

Although Pakistan and Egypt are separated by more than 2,000 miles and have different national languages and histories, Pakistan's Jama'at-i Islami and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood share some striking similarities. Both groups (1) were founded around the same time; (2) were led in their early formative stages by charismatic and dedicated leaders (Mawdudi in the case of the Jama'at and al-Banna in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood); (3) used printed tracts which carried various teachings about Islam that the leaders of the groups believed were crucial for the populations of each country to know; (4) utilized already-existing mosques and Friday sermons as vital organizational structures and means of spreading their messages; (5) engaged in certain forms of grassroots organizing which involved, in part, leaders of the two organizations training people under them who would spread the groups' respective messages within the people's neighborhoods with the hope of spreading their Islamist message more widely and finding new members for their respective organizations; (6) fused their religious and political messages in such a way that positioned them to attempt to change or overthrow the secularist governments which they opposed in their respective countries; and (7) had a substantial impact on Islamist groups outside of their respective countries, with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood being a catalyst for chapters of the organization in a variety of nations and regions including Jordan, Syria, Sudan, and the West Bank and Gaza, while the Jama'at has had a significant influence on other Islamist groups in Pakistan, and the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as Islamist groups operating in Kashmir and India, for example.¹⁰⁵

The two groups, like some other Islamist groups, also have a common vision for the Islamic state that they would like to establish, which includes the establishment of Islamic law for every aspect of life in both countries; the creation of Islamically-based governments which are led by what members of these groups believe to be true Muslims; the formation of Islamic schools and universities, which would teach Islam from a single perspective and would be the only kinds of schools that people in those countries could attend; the enforcement of stringent moral and legal codes, which would include the separation of women and men, who are not related, and the prohibition of alcohol, gambling, and prostitution; and the

institution of economic systems within those countries where wealth would be distributed equitably and where the large gaps between the rich and the poor would be reduced. For both groups, the Islamic governments that come into place should make available health care and a wide array of social services including food pantries, homeless shelters, and welfare services that would assist as many people as possible.¹⁰⁶ While many members of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Pakistan's Jama'at-i Islami hold these and other principles in common, there is also some diversity within these and other Islamist organizations, which includes differences with respect to the ages of the groups' members, the degree to which certain members believe governmental institutions and ideas should be accommodated, the speed at which change should take place, and the methods that should be used in effecting such changes.¹⁰⁷ The level at which Islamist groups, such as Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Pakistan's Jama'at-i Islami, can remain unified and attempt to be effectual in the midst of these and other challenges is an open question.

In Pakistan, Islamist groups such as the Jama'at-i Islami and similar organizations have exerted a considerable influence on many aspects of laws, customs, and morals, including marriage and divorce, education, and Pakistan's penal code.¹⁰⁸ The Islamists in Pakistan have also had an impact on various mass media outlets in Pakistan, including television, radio, and newspapers, for example.¹⁰⁹ These developments constitute the creation of a *public Islam* in Pakistan, which has had the purpose of giving the Pakistani government the appearance that its policies are consistent with Islamic principles. One of the goals of this public Islam has been to convince the Pakistani citizenry at large, as well as members of Pakistan's Islamist groups and their sympathizers, that the Pakistani state has taken Islam so seriously that it has enabled Islam to significantly influence some of the most important aspects of life in Pakistan. Thus, the state has been using this public Islam in its accommodationalist/oppositionalist approach as a way of accommodating the Islamists and their sympathizers, and, at the same time, in the government's countervailing efforts of opposing the influence of various Islamist groups in Pakistan, including that of the Jama'at-i Islami.¹¹⁰

Egypt's government under President Hosni Mubarak, who held office from 1981 until 2011, also established a form of public Islam in its deployment of an accommodationalist/oppositionalist approach as it attempted to limit the influence of the Islamists there. The Mubarak government's efforts to promote its particular version of Islam consisted of similar approaches to those of the Pakistani government, which included attempts to imbue aspects of Islam into Egypt's educational system (including Cairo's al-Azhar University), laws, mosques, state television, newspapers, tourist information, and international diplomacy.¹¹¹ In these and other private and public spheres, Mubarak's government, on the one hand, and

Egypt's Islamists, on the other, each attempted during Mubarak's regime to make themselves appear more Muslim than the other, with the hope of winning as many Egyptians with Islamist sympathies as possible to their side.¹¹² The potential long-term implications of this dynamic relationship between Islamists and the governments that they oppose (both within and outside of Egypt) remain to be seen, particularly in view of the protests that began with events in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011.

Many of these dynamics and effects, as well as the Mubarak government's accommodationalist/oppositionalist approaches, have also been at work in the Pakistani government's relationship with Islamists inside and outside of Pakistan, and in the relationships of the Moroccan, Jordanian, and Indonesian governments with Islamists in their countries, to name a few examples.¹¹³ This push-and-pull between certain governments in the majority-Muslim world and the Islamists who have opposed them has had a significant effect on the governments who confront these groups and on the groups that oppose them. Not the least of these effects has been the establishment of various governmentally-approved "public Islams" among governments whose ideologies had, historically, been based on secularist principles. The very perpetuation of these "public Islams" could call into question the extent to which a variety of states in the majority-Muslim world (such as Pakistan and Egypt) could be considered fully secular at present or in the future. The implications of potentially expanding "public Islams" could continue to have profound effects on the day-to-day lives of Muslims living in those majority-Muslim countries as well as those countries' relationships with Western nations.¹¹⁴ Yet, the eventual outcomes of such dynamics and events are not yet clear.

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Afghanistan

While Pakistan and Afghanistan have a long and complicated history and Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan goes as far back as Pakistan's independence in 1947, Pakistan's policies toward and within Afghanistan during and after the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 are significant in a consideration of Islamism in general and in analyzing the mujahideen, the Taliban, and Afghanistan in particular. Indeed, the cooperation between Pakistan, the United States, the mujahideen, and several majority-Muslim countries, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, gave rise to the Taliban and al-Qaida, which were two of the offshoots of the mujahideen, and began establishing themselves in the early 1990s. In this history, the very group which Pakistan, the United States, and several majority-Muslim countries supported – the mujahideen – gave rise to two of the groups, the Taliban and al-Qaida, which became ardent opponents of the United States and virtually all of the regimes in the majority-Muslim world. Thus, the creation of the Taliban, al-Qaida, and their affiliate organizations constitutes one of several classic cases of “blowback,” that is, the process by which an ally that a nation or nations support eventually turns against the nation or nations that supported them.

Zia ul-Haq and Pakistan's Involvement in Afghanistan

After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, President Zia ul-Haq attempted to seek political advantage for himself and for Pakistan on five fronts at once – eventually leading to the creation of the mujahideen, and

subsequently the Taliban and al-Qaida, which would become forceful opponents of subsequent Pakistani regimes. Zia's five fronts were: (1) certain Middle Eastern and North African countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Yemen; (2) the Soviet Union; (3) the United States; (4) China; and (5) Afghanistan.¹

First, Zia called upon the leaders of various majority-Muslim countries to aid the mujahideen in their war against the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, because of what Zia believed was the anti-Islamic nature of the Soviet Union and the potential of its increasing influence in the region. Over time, the governments of several majority-Muslim countries provided financial and other forms of support to the mujahideen. One reason that the leaders of these countries believed it was to their advantage to support the mujahideen was because their governments were aligned economically and politically with the United States. Consistent with that, these leaders believed that Soviet expansion into Afghanistan and its possible future expansion into Iran and other Middle Eastern countries could lead to Soviet domination, which would threaten these Middle Eastern countries' sovereignty and their profits from oil sales to Western and other industrialized countries. At the same time, it must be noted that the Soviet Union provided military and/or economic aid to some of the same majority-Muslim countries that opposed its expansion in the region.² Thus, the governments of some of those countries were willing to accept aid from the Soviets while allowing Islamist militants to go to Afghanistan in order to fight against the Soviet Union there.

The second factor that may have played into the decision of some Middle Eastern and North African leaders to support the mujahideen was that this support put them in a position to grant permission to the Islamists within their own Middle Eastern countries to go to Afghanistan to fight alongside of the Afghan mujahideen against the Soviets. The Islamists to whom these Middle Eastern and North African leaders granted permission to go to Afghanistan, in addition to opposing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, opposed the regimes within their home countries. By granting these Islamists permission to go to Afghanistan, the Middle Eastern and North African leaders believed they were ridding themselves – at least temporarily – of several influential Islamist leaders and rank-and-file activists, who threatened their regimes.³

The second of the five fronts that Zia attempted to buttress during the Soviet war in Afghanistan was with the Soviet Union itself. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union had been a significant economic and political ally of Pakistan and while Zia supported the mujahideen, he made sustained efforts to maintain Pakistan's alliance with the Soviet Union partly so that Pakistan could continue to enjoy the political and economic benefits of this relationship and also because Zia hoped that Pakistan could, in the future,

mediate a settlement in the Soviet war in Afghanistan in such a way that would favor Pakistan. Zia believed that maintaining a strong relationship with the Soviet Union was an important means for possibly achieving these objectives. In his support of two opposing sides in the Afghan war, Zia was intentionally trying to ally his government with two different sides of the war at the same time, with the goal of increasing Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan and the region more broadly.⁴

The third front that was important to Zia was Pakistan's relationship with the United States. While Zia asked the United States government for military aid that would assist the mujahideen, his requests contained demands for finances and arms that far exceeded the needs or capabilities of the mujahideen. While the American President Jimmy Carter refused these seemingly excessive requests from Zia, after Ronald Reagan became President in 1980, he supported most of Zia's requests, approving, for example, the sale of 16 American F-16As, which was a fleet of fighter bombers that Pakistan could use against its rival India.⁵

Zia's fourth front was Pakistan's relationship with China. A Sino-Pakistani cooperation treaty signed in 1986 carried stipulations regarding China providing Pakistan with knowledge and materials for a civilian nuclear power program, while at the same time, in a more veiled way, this agreement constituted a continuation of Bhutto's nuclear weapons policy. Partly because of Pakistan's role as a buffer against the Soviet Union and its support of the mujahideen, President Reagan and the United States Congress intentionally turned a blind eye to the fact that Pakistan was using its treaty and its broader relationship with China as a way of building its nuclear weapons program. By the time Soviet soldiers withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, Pakistan possessed a nuclear weapon. Possibly fearing an overly powerful Pakistan – albeit the same country that had been helpful to the United States during the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan – the United States imposed sanctions on Pakistan in 1990 that were very similar to the ones the United States had lifted in 1979. While these new sanctions blocked the sale of the last few F-16As, they had no impact on Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, which was – from the Pakistani government's view – a success.⁶

Pakistan's fifth front was Afghanistan itself. Zia used Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which was a military and intelligence arm of the Pakistani government whose members actively supported the mujahideen in Afghanistan, as one means for gathering intelligence about the war in Afghanistan and as a vessel for providing, training, support, finances, and arms to the mujahideen. Zia had at least four reasons for supporting the mujahideen as extensively as he did: (1) in Zia's view, Pakistan's active presence in Afghanistan could have had the effect of increasing Pakistan's regional influence; (2) Zia was hoping that Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan would enable Pakistan to have an influence on Afghanistan's

eventual political leadership in such a way that this leadership would be favorable toward Pakistan's interests; (3) Zia wanted Pakistan's strategic depth in Afghanistan to provide him with increased political leverage in his confrontations with India; and (4) presciently, Zia believed that the Soviet Union would collapse or withdraw from Central Asia, and in the wake of this hoped-for waning of Soviet influence in Central Asia, Zia hoped that Pakistan could use its presence in Afghanistan as a stepping-stone for influence in Central Asia.⁷ Over time, it appears that Zia's policies may not have had a positive impact on Pakistan, its regional influence, or its relationship with its neighbors. Quite the opposite, these policies may have served to undercut Pakistan's interests in the sense that several of the significant Islamist outgrowths of the mujahideen, such as the Taliban, al-Qaida, Lashkar-i Taiba, and similar groups, have made significant territorial and other gains in their efforts to weaken and topple subsequent Pakistani regimes; although the extent to which Pakistan will be able to use the Taliban effectively as its proxy in Afghanistan remains to be seen.⁸

A History of Pakistan's Involvement in Afghanistan

While Zia's and subsequent Pakistani Presidents' support of Islamist groups such as the mujahideen, the Taliban, and Lashkar-i Taiba has had, at best, mixed results for Pakistan, Pakistan's attempted use of Islamist groups as proxies for its own perceived benefit is not new. For example, when a coup d'état restored the Afghan Prince Daud to power in 1973, five years before Zia became Pakistan's President, Pakistan gave refuge to Afghan Islamists who utilized armed resistance against the largely secularist Afghan regime.⁹ These Afghan Islamists, who were trained by the Pakistani military and accompanied by members of Pakistan's Jama'at-i Islami, launched an unsuccessful revolt against the secularist Afghan regime in 1975 and then withdrew to Peshawar in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan, where they resided until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 gave them another opportunity to make incursions into Afghanistan with the hope of eventually installing an Islamist regime.¹⁰

Thus, there came into existence a network of Islamically-based opponents to Afghanistan's secularist regimes, which used Pakistan and the majority-Pashtun Afghanistan-Pakistan border region as its base. This network was comprised in part of traditional members of the ulema, who after Pakistani independence in 1947 refused to finish their Islamic education in India, as had been the usual practice among Afghan students studying Islam until that time. One reason that many Afghan students did not receive their Islamic education in Afghanistan was because for a significant length of time there were no top-notch Islamic schools or madrasahs in Afghanistan.

Hence, they attended madrasahs in Pakistan that were independent of their parent schools in India. In the period after Pakistani independence, many ethnic Pashtuns living in Afghanistan and Pakistan (15 percent of Pakistan's and 42 percent of Afghanistan's population is ethnically Pashtun) who sought education in madrasahs did so in Pakistan.¹¹

The students who received their education at these schools and then became members of the ulema returned to Afghanistan and established madrasahs in that country which were patterned after the madrasahs in Pakistan that they had attended. In this way, a network of madrasahs, which were strongly Islamist in their content, practice, and approach, emerged in the majority-Pashtun areas which exist in and near the Afghan-Pakistan border. These madrasah-based Islamic educational networks, which operated outside of the control of any government, became stronger during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan because the Afghan madrasahs, which were usually either destroyed or converted into military bases, were no longer effective in providing their students with an Islamic education. There were also teachers at these madrasahs who had been trained outside of Pakistan – usually in the Middle East – and had come to the madrasahs to teach students in order to enable them to resist the Soviets in one way or another.¹²

Madrasahs, the Mujahideen's War against the Soviets, and the Taliban's Rise

During the war against the Soviets, some of the members of the mujahideen who were students in these regional madrasahs used part of their time to engage in the war against the Soviets and the rest of their time to study in the madrasahs. Much in the same way that Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries supplied finances and other forms of support to the mujahideen in their war effort, these countries also provided substantial subsidies to these madrasahs, whose teachings were strictly Islamist in nature. Within these madrasahs, the students who were illiterate could, in some cases, become a bit more literate. They and their fellow students would also receive food, shelter, and camaraderie with other Muslim men. In addition to reinforcing one another's religious and political beliefs through conversations and fellowship inside and outside the classroom, they would pray regularly and follow what they believed to be all the tenets and practices of Islam. These experiences in the madrasahs enabled the student-mujahideen who were in them to form strong religious, political, and social bonds in such a way that afforded them some of the psychological and physical strength that enabled them to fight the Soviets, whom they believed were atheistic members of a *jahili* society that sought to destroy Islam.¹³

The madrasahs' teachers, both inside and outside the classroom, taught the students that their physical jihad against the Soviets was similar to the physical jihad which Muhammad and the seventh-century Muslims had to wage in and near Medina as they attempted to protect Islam from the destruction which its enemies sought to bring. This was one of several religio-political ideologies that motivated the mujahideen who were students in the madrasahs to wage their decade-long war against the Soviets. The teachers of these schools came from various parts of the majority-Muslim world, including Pakistan and Egypt, and brought with them the Islamist ideas and pedagogical techniques of their home countries. For example, teachers from Egypt who had been members of or influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood brought those ideas with them, while members of Pakistan's Jama'at-i Islami brought their ideas and techniques with them. Those and other Islamists hoped that the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan would be an opportunity to put their Islamist ideas into practice in such a way that would enable them to mold Afghanistan into an ideal Islamic state that would be an example for other majority-Muslim countries to follow. These Islamists viewed the Soviets' invasion and occupation of Afghanistan as part of a divinely-inspired plan for Muslims to Islamize Afghanistan and eventually the world. Thus, the madrasahs which the mujahideen attended served the purposes of providing an Islamic education, strengthening the mujahideen for warfare, while opening the gates for a broader expansion of Islamism.¹⁴ Indeed, the word *talib*, in several languages which are spoken in South Asia and the majority-Muslim world, means student, and the word Taliban is a plural form of that word. Thus, the Taliban, as that group of Islamists in Pakistan and Afghanistan were later to be called, emerged initially as students from the madrasahs within the predominantly Pashtun border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the midst of and as a key part of these activities, the Pakistani government had at least two entities, which it perceived to be its proxies, operating within Afghanistan: first, the Islamists, largely represented by the Jama'at-i Islami, who through various periods of Zia's regime were more or less allied with his government, and second, Pakistan's ISI which served directly as an arm of Pakistan's government within Afghanistan. Zia also attempted to manipulate the United States and its support of the Afghan opposition in such a way that he believed would serve Pakistan's interests. One of Pakistan's Afghan allies, which was fighting against the Soviets, was the ethnic Pashtun Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Pashtun-dominated Islamist organization, Hizb-i Islami (Party of Islam), which was strongly allied with the ISI and the Jama'at. Both of these organizations were comprised overwhelmingly of Pashtuns with Islamist sympathies. Zia succeeded in channeling significant amounts of American aid to the Hizb-i Islami and the Jama'at in Afghanistan, in such a way that bolstered these organizations and

his relationships with them. The Pakistani government also encouraged Islamists who were members of Islamist groups whose bases were outside of Afghanistan and Pakistan to come to Afghanistan and Pakistan for the purpose of teaching in madrasahs in those countries, while supporting the mujahideen in other ways also. As volunteers from a variety of Islamist groups from several parts of the majority-Muslim world came to Pakistan and Afghanistan, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan all encouraged this process, motivated simultaneously by some interests that overlapped and others that did not. In this process, Pakistan was one important arena where these Islamist volunteers were trained and sent into action within Afghanistan.¹⁵

More broadly, one way that Pakistan took advantage of the road between Gilgit, which is in Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, and Kashgar, which is in the Chinese province of Xinjiang and contains a large Muslim population, was by encouraging Muslim Uighurs from that province to stay in the Jama'at-i Islami's guesthouses in Lahore and Karachi on their way to Mecca for the hajj. Significant numbers of these Uighurs attended madrasahs in Pakistan and fought against the Soviets alongside of the mujahideen. These and other cooperative military strategies that Pakistan and its allies implemented were key factors that led to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989.¹⁶

The Aftermath of the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan

After the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, it descended into a turbulent and violent multi-sided civil war. Regional, ethnic, clan, and religious differences within Afghanistan, which had existed over a wide expanse of history, became even more obvious after the Soviet withdrawal than before, with warfare taking place between Afghan militias which were attached to various warlord fiefdoms. These militias engaged in battles, changed alliances, and then battled each other again. This pattern was repeated frequently. These ever-changing battles took place in the midst of continually shifting alliances, betrayals, and cloak-and-dagger maneuvers where one or more warlords or militias sought the advantage over their immediate enemies who could later become their allies against other enemies.¹⁷

During this immediate post-Soviet-occupation civil-war period in Afghanistan, different warlords had influence over different parts of Afghanistan. The government of Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani had a modicum of influence over Kabul, which is Afghanistan's capital, the area surrounding it, and portions of northeastern Afghanistan. At the same

time, Ismael Khan controlled the city of Herat and three provinces in the western part of Afghanistan. A council (or Shura) of mujahideen from the period of the Afghan resistance against the Soviet occupation controlled Jalalabad and three majority-Pashtun provinces in the eastern part of Afghanistan. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar controlled a small area southeast of Kabul. In the northern part of Afghanistan, Rashid Dostum had influence over six provinces and in January 1994 he withdrew his support from Rabbani's government and allied himself with Hekmatyar to attack Kabul. In central Afghanistan, the members of the Hazara ethnic group, most of whom are Shiite Muslims, controlled the Afghan province of Bamiyan. A large number of ex-mujahideen warlords had divided control of southern Afghanistan among themselves and took advantage of the population in that area at will, as various individuals, tribes, and factions violently battled each other.¹⁸

The situation was so chaotic after the Soviets withdrew, that members of some international aid organizations were afraid of working in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, for example, because the city itself was divided among various groups who were at war with each other. The warlords and other leaders in Kandahar sold as many of the city's assets as they could to Pakistani traders in order to turn profits for themselves. For instance, these Afghan leaders sold telephone poles and wires, electric transformers, factories, machinery, road maintenance equipment, trees, and bushes to various businesspeople and scrap merchants.¹⁹ The Afghan political leaders in this and other regions exploited members of the population at will, kidnapping people for ransom, stealing from various merchants, and clashing in the streets. Instead of Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan, large numbers of Afghan refugees left Kandahar and surrounding towns for Pakistani cities such as Quetta, which is near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.²⁰

In the midst of this tumultuous post-Soviet Afghan civil war, teachers and students from a variety of madrasahs in the majority-Pashtun areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan enunciated the Taliban's goals, which were based on their strict interpretation of Islam's teachings. They wanted to restore peace to the region, disarm the members of Afghanistan's population who were not members of the Taliban, and enforce the strictest possible form of Islamic law on Afghanistan's population. These ideas were strongly influenced by the Wahhabi Islamist teachings which the Saudi government had spent huge amounts of money to spread in the madrasahs of Pakistan and Afghanistan, particularly the ones in the border regions of those two countries. The central point where these ideas coalesced and solidified was in Kandahar in 1994.²¹

Most of the members of the Taliban, during this and later periods, were Afghan and Pakistani Pashtun Sunni Muslims who had fought as mujahideen against the Soviets and were deeply frustrated with the factionalism and

criminal behaviors of the mujahideen's leadership. Many of the members of the Taliban had been born in refugee camps in Pakistan along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border and viewed themselves as part of the true Muslim generation who would restore peace and justice to Afghanistan by imposing the full force of Islamic law upon the entire country. These members of the Taliban, in addition to learning about Islam from the madrasahs in the Pashtun areas, had learned their battle skills from the mujahideen, many of whom had been trained by the CIA, or directly from the CIA itself.²²

Amir Mullah Mohammed Omar: Leader of the Taliban

Some members of the Taliban say that the Afghan Pashtun Amir Mullah Mohammed Omar (who is often called “Mullah Omar”) was chosen as the Taliban's leader largely because of his strong Islamic beliefs and unswerving piety. Others say that he was chosen by God. Mullah Omar himself explained the situation in this way: “We took up arms to achieve the aims of the Afghan jihad and save our people from further suffering at the hands of the so-called Mujahideen. We had complete faith in God almighty. We never forgot that. He can bless us with victory or plunge us into defeat.”²³

Mullah Omar was born to Pashtun parents, who were landless peasants, in approximately 1959 in a small town near Kandahar. During the 1980s while the mujahideen were fighting against the Soviets, his family moved to a small town which was in a difficult-to-access region in Afghanistan's Uruzgan province, where Mullah Omar's father died while Omar was a young man. Later, Mullah Omar moved to a town in Kandahar province where he became the town's mullah, or Muslim teacher and religious leader, and he established a small madrasah. Previously, his own studies as a madrasah student had been interrupted twice, first by the Soviet invasion and then by the establishment of the Taliban. Between 1989 and 1992, Mullah Omar was a soldier in an Afghan Islamist group that fought against the government of Afghan President Muhammad Najibullah. Omar has three wives and five children, who were students in the madrasah where he taught.²⁴

While there are numerous stories that attempt to explain how Mullah Omar mobilized the Taliban against some of Kandahar's greedy, violent, and self-serving warlords, the one that is repeated most frequently is the following. In the spring of 1994 several of Mullah Omar's neighbors from the town of Singesar, where he had been teaching in the madrasah, told him that a warlord from Kandahar had abducted two teenage girls who had been taken to a militia base and repeatedly raped. Omar gathered roughly 30 students from his madrasah, who had only 16 rifles between them, and attacked the base, liberating the girls, and hanged the commander, while seizing ammunition and arms.²⁵

A few months later, two warlords in Kandahar argued with each other over a young boy, whom each one wanted to rape. In the fight that ensued, several other people were killed. Mullah Omar's Taliban freed the boy and then others in Kandahar began asking Omar and the Taliban to assist in their disputes. In the minds of many people in Kandahar province, Mullah Omar was a person who helped poor people against greedy, ravenous, and unjust warlords. One of the reasons his reputation became increasingly positive was that he did not ask the people whom he helped for any reward; his primary demand was that they support the Islamic system he espoused. Mullah Omar told the people whom he assisted and others that his good deeds were motivated by his faith in God and that if they supported him in transforming Afghanistan into a true Islamic state, justice and fairness would rule and there would be no more harmful and self-absorbed leaders governing the land; the day of the powerful exploiting the weak would end. He preached his message quoting passages of the Quran and Hadith which proclaimed the importance of justice, liberty, and the horrors of self-aggrandizement and taking advantage of others.²⁶ Using simple language that both the literate and the illiterate (who comprise over 70 percent of Afghanistan's population) could understand, Mullah Omar stated that, in the Prophet Muhammad's words and deeds, he stood for a community that manifested mercy, compassion, beneficence, righteousness, and justice, and he told Afghans that if they joined his Taliban movement they could create the kind of society which God and Muhammad envisioned.²⁷

At the same time, Mullah Omar sent peace emissaries to leaders outside of Kandahar province, such as Ismael Khan, Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, seeking a modicum of peace with them. In addition, some of Mullah Omar's and the Taliban's strongest connections were with Pakistan's government and with the ISI, a large number of whose members were Pashtun and had studied in Saudi-financed Islamist madrasahs in the majority-Pashtun borderland regions along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. These ISI agents had strong Islamist sympathies. While these ISI agents' Islamist orientation and Pashtun ethnicity were crucial points of overlap between them and most members of the Taliban, the ISI agents were employed by Pakistan's largely secularist government, which, during key periods of the Taliban's emergence, was under the largely secularist leadership of Benazir Bhutto, who was Pakistan's Prime Minister from 1988 until 1990 and again from 1993 until 1996.²⁸

As employees of the Pakistani government, the ISI agents also shared some priorities with it, namely the goal of the Pakistani government to use routes through Afghanistan for trade and commerce with the newly-emerged countries of Central Asia and the Pakistani government's long-standing goal of maximizing its influence in Afghanistan so as to gain additional strategic depth against India. In order to attain these goals, the Pakistani government

and the ISI had to make Afghanistan's highways and roadways that connected Pakistan with Central Asia as safe as possible. Because of Afghanistan's multi-sided civil war during the early 1990s, various bandits and warlords ruled virtually all of these highways, charging astronomical tolls, blocking portions of the highways at will, and raiding whichever vehicles they chose. Members of the Pakistani government and the ISI knew they had to end this state of affairs if they were to use these highways for trade and increase Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan and eventually in Central Asia.²⁹

Early Taliban Victories

While members of the Pakistani government deliberated the course of action they should take in attempting to achieve their goals, the Taliban gained two major military victories: first in October 1994 in the southern Afghan town of Spin Boldak, which is on the border with Pakistan and was a key town on the highway between Quetta, Pakistan and Ashgabat (the capital of Turkmenistan), and second in November 1994 in the city of Kandahar, Afghanistan's second largest city and a key point on the Quetta-Ashgabat highway. The members of the Taliban were strongly tied to each other through their common Islamic faith, their Pashtun ethnicity, military experience gained from their resistance against the Soviets, the absolute belief that God was on their side, and promises of sizable cash bonuses and monthly stipends from the transport operators if the Taliban could secure Spin Boldak. With these deep connections to each other giving them strength, the Taliban seized a key military garrison and an arms depot there which provided them with 18,000 Kalashnikov rifles, numerous pieces of artillery, huge amounts of ammunition, and several vehicles.³⁰

By early November 1994, the Taliban had moved north to the city of Kandahar, where after two days of fighting and the loss of just 12 Taliban soldiers, they captured Kandahar and a cache of weapons and arms there including large numbers of tanks, armored cars, military vehicles, and other equipment, much of which was still in Kandahar from the time of the Soviet occupation. After this victory, which the Taliban gained partly as a result of assistance from their Islamist allies and the Pakistani government, the Taliban secured enough of the Quetta-Ashgabat highway in December 1994 to charge a one-time toll to trucks and enable a 50-truck convoy carrying raw cotton from Turkmenistan to arrive in Quetta after the truck operators paid the Taliban a toll of 5,000 dollars. After these victories, approximately 12,000 students from Islamist madrasahs in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region, inspired by the Taliban's gains and their belief that the Taliban and its victories were blessed by God, joined the Taliban in Kandahar with the hope of eventually bringing all of Afghanistan under Islamic law.³¹

Soon after its victories, the Taliban strictly enforced its interpretation of Islamic law in all of the areas that it controlled. In addition to bringing peace and security to the areas which had previously been torn by civil war, they closed girls' schools and banned women from working outside of the home, because, according to their interpretation of the Quran and Hadith, there was no justification for women receiving an education or working outside of the home. In their view, these Islamic sacred texts taught that women had the responsibility of staying at home and caring for their children and husbands, while men had the responsibility of working outside the home and caring for their wives and children. The Taliban also forbade the use of television sets because, in their view, Islam's sacred texts strictly prohibit the creation or conveying of images. The Taliban also believed that televisions were Western inventions that if improperly used, as they had been by Westerners on many occasions, could promote greed, selfishness, materialism, and sex outside of heterosexual marriage. The Taliban also forbade most sports and recreational activities because they viewed them as Western contrivances which brought useless pleasure and severely distracted Muslims from their Islamic obligations and their focus on God.³²

Not all Islamists necessarily agree with all of the Taliban's policies. Among many other examples, members of some Islamist groups in Egypt and among the Palestinians believe in women and men being properly educated in Islam and other disciplines and having distinct roles within these groups' activities.³³ With the exception of the Taliban, a very large number of Islamist groups throughout the world use television and video for a variety of purposes, including the spread of their message.³⁴ Many Islamist groups also support the utilization of sports and recreation – as long as women and men remain separate from each other and engage in sports in accordance with Islamic principles – as legitimate and important ways of enabling Muslims to condition their bodies and build strong ties with each other.³⁵

With regard to the Taliban, utilizing methods that were similar to those that they used in their conquest of Spin Boldak, Kandahar, and the securing of the Quetta-Ashgabat highway, they were able to take control of 12 of Afghanistan's 31 provinces in the period between November 1994 and February 1995. After the Taliban's victories in Kandahar, they followed the Quetta-Ashgabat highway in a northwesterly direction toward Herat, Afghanistan, which is a largely ethnically Tajik and Persian-speaking part of Afghanistan. By February 1995, as the Taliban were moving toward Herat, some reports suggest that as many as 20,000 Afghan and Pakistani students who had been studying in the madrasahs within the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan streamed toward Kandahar and areas north of it to join the Taliban in their march and effort to capture Herat and, as they hoped, eventually all of Afghanistan. Many of these madrasah students, all

of whom were men, were between 14 and 24 years of age and while at least some had never fought, they knew how to handle a weapon.³⁶

In their studies at the madrasahs, these young men had learned the Quran, the Hadith, and certain aspects of Islamic law as taught by teachers some of whose own educational backgrounds were relatively limited. Very few of the students or teachers had a significant knowledge of math, science, geography, or history, for example. These young men who had joined or would soon join the Taliban had never seen Afghanistan in a state of peace. The simple and straightforward Islamist form of Islam, which these young members of the Taliban had learned in their madrasahs, was the only form of Islam that they knew and gave their lives meaning. Unlike their parents and ancestors who were in traditional professions such as farming, herding, and the making of handicrafts, many of these young members of the Taliban were largely trained for warfare.³⁷

For a variety of reasons, these young members of the Taliban, who were too young to have fought within the mujahideen against the Soviets, had not known the company of women. For example, some of these young Taliban members were orphans, who were raised in orphanages, refugee camps, and/or madrasahs without mothers, sisters, aunts, great aunts, grandmothers or female cousins. The male Muslim teachers of these men who were to join the Taliban taught their students that the Quran and Hadith required Muslims to separate women and men and that the only Islamically-approved sphere where women were permitted to dwell was the home. Thus, the Taliban's policy which involved limiting women to the home was motivated by those men's almost life-long separation from women and their understanding of Islam's teachings.³⁸

As the Taliban gained quick and decisive military victories, especially during 1994 and 1995, most members of the Taliban believed that God had granted them these victories, much like God had granted (1) Muhammad and the early Muslims military victories against their enemies in the seventh century; (2) Muhammad's successors victories in the 100-year period after Muhammad's death; and (3) Muslim armies victories against the Western Crusaders during the Middle Ages. This interpretation of Islamic history played a crucial role in catalyzing the Taliban and helping the group gain more recruits.³⁹ While the Taliban experienced some victories and defeats between January and September 1995, when it finally conquered Herat, it captured considerable amounts of ground during that period including provinces, towns, and cities such as Uruzgan, Zabul, Helmand, and Wardak. By September 5, 1995, which is when the Taliban with approximately 20,000 of its soldiers conquered Herat, the Taliban controlled the entire western part of Afghanistan, which is largely ethnically Tajik and Persian-speaking. At this point, the Taliban held sway over Afghanistan's western border region with Iran, where the national language is Persian,

and, for the first time, the mostly Pashtun Taliban controlled an area where ethnic Pashtuns were not in the majority.⁴⁰

The Taliban treated Herat as an occupied city, imposing Sharia in a manner similar to the way they had established it in other areas that they governed. The Taliban soldiers who defended Herat and patrolled its streets were Pashtuns who were not natives of Herat, did not speak the local language, and thus were incapable of communicating with or understanding the indigenous people of Herat. During the first several years of the Taliban's rule, no indigenous Heratis became part of the Taliban's local government. For Heratis, whose city and province had been a major center of education and culture, being ruled by the Pashtuns, whom the Heratis considered uncultured and vulgar, constituted a sad and insulting state of affairs. From a Herati point of view, if there was anything to be gained from the Taliban's rule, it was the fact that it brought at least some temporary peace from the belligerent forms of chaos that had tormented Afghanistan during its civil war. For the Taliban, the city and province of Herat constituted one of the crucial regions that they believed they had to conquer in order to bring the "true Islam" and the peace that ensued from it to the region.⁴¹

Mullah Omar and the Kandahar Assembly

In March 1996, more than 1,000 mostly Pashtun Muslim leaders from various parts of Afghanistan arrived in Kandahar for a large meeting that was to have two goals. First, the participants intended to give Mullah Omar their full public acclamation as the true leader of Afghanistan – and as the related ritual suggested – the leader of Muslims worldwide. Second, the attendees wanted to discuss the next steps that the Taliban should take after having conquered substantial amounts of territory in Afghanistan, including Herat. The Taliban's 10-month siege of Kabul, Afghanistan's capital which is where Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani's government was based, had been largely unsuccessful, while there were large numbers of casualties among the Taliban as a result of that military operation. There were vigorous debates among members of the Taliban about whether the Taliban's attack on Kabul should continue. Moderate members of the Taliban stated that given the Taliban's lack of progress during its siege of the city, it would not be able to conquer it and should negotiate a peace agreement with the Kabul government. More conservative members of the Taliban supported the organization's continued siege of the city. After more than two weeks of discussion and debate, all of which took place in secrecy with almost no exposure to the media, the attendees of the conference decided to confer upon Mullah Omar the title of "Amir ul-Mu'minin" (which means "Commander of the Faithful") and to continue the Taliban's war effort to

capture Kabul, believing that much like God had blessed early and medieval Muslims with victories against their enemies, he would continue to do the same for the Taliban.⁴²

The title of “Commander of the Faithful,” which Mullah Omar’s fellow-Taliban members bestowed upon him, is one with profound meaning and deep historical resonances within Islam. It was the title adopted by Umar ibn al-Khattab, Sunni Islam’s second caliph or successor to Muhammad, who ruled from 634 until 644, and was the title of caliphs who ruled after him.⁴³ Much in the same way that Muslims view Muhammad as having been the ruler of every aspect of Muslims’ lives – including the religious, political, social, economic, and military domains – during the time that he led the Islamic community, so too Sunni Muslims look upon the caliphs as possessing similar roles in Islamic societies.⁴⁴ Thus, when the members of the Kandahar conference named Omar the “Commander of the Faithful,” the Emir of Afghanistan (or the religious and political leader of the country), and the undisputed leader of the physical jihad against the Rabbani government, which the Taliban considered to be un-Islamic, they were bestowing the highest level of status and legitimacy on Mullah Omar.

In April 1996, when Mullah Omar appeared on a rooftop dressed in what his audience looked upon as the mantle of the Prophet Muhammad, they publicly recognized his high status by shouting “Commander of the Faithful” as he stood above them. This Taliban assembly also gave Mullah Omar its *bay’a* or allegiance, which, in the minds of the Taliban, was the same kind of allegiance that the early Muslims gave to the Prophet Muhammad and that Muslims gave to the caliphs who followed him. Among other meanings, the offering of this allegiance has historically constituted an act by which a person is proclaimed and recognized as the head of a Muslim state, for example.⁴⁵

Adding to the religious and political symbolism, Mullah Omar has the same first name as the caliph Umar, Sunni Islam’s second caliph, whom Sunnis consider to be among the first four Rightly Guided caliphs, all of whom, in Muslims’ view, walked in the footsteps of Muhammad by properly governing the Islamic community from the time of his death in 632, until 661.⁴⁶ Among Umar’s many accomplishments during his caliphate were Muslim armies’ conquests of much of Persia (or Iran), Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and most significantly Jerusalem, which is Islam’s third holiest city and which some scholars believe Umar may have visited. Among many Sunni Muslims, Umar also has the reputation of a just, pragmatic, and able administrator.⁴⁷

Mullah Omar drew upon this mythic history in his speeches and interactions with Afghans, presenting himself as a modern-day Umar who, with God’s blessing, would conquer territory and administer it in an equitable and capable manner. In this spirit, around the time of the Kandahar assembly in March 1996, Mullah Wakil, an aide to Mullah Omar, stated,

“We want to live a life like the prophet lived fourteen hundred years ago and jihad is our right. We want to re-create the time of the Prophet and we are only carrying out what the Afghan people have wanted for the past fourteen years,” referring to the approximately 10 years of the Afghan war against the Soviets in the 1980s and the four years of civil war in Afghanistan that followed.⁴⁸

Hence, the members of the Taliban who participated in the Kandahar assembly in March 1996 left the meeting having officially chosen Mullah Omar as their leader and having publicly announced their common declaration of physical jihad against Rabbani’s government. At the same time, the bestowal of the title “Commander of the Faithful” upon Mullah Omar and the allegiance that the Taliban offered him were recognized almost exclusively by the Taliban. The vast majority of other Muslims did not view Mullah Omar as their leader or consider him their commander.

The Taliban and Kabul

After trying to take Kabul for almost 18 months, the Taliban conquered the city in late September 1996, hanged former Afghan President Muhammad Najibullah, who ruled from 1986 until 1992, and imposed the same Islamic law codes on Kabul as they had on the other territories that they had conquered.⁴⁹ During these war efforts, the Taliban was supported with arms and supplies from the governments of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, while the Taliban’s opponents were supported by Iran, Russia, and several Central Asian republics. The Pakistani support had, by the fall of 1996, resulted in Pakistan partially achieving its goal of securing safe land passage from Pakistan to the Central Asian republics, while providing it with a modicum of “strategic depth” in Afghanistan. At the same time, the Saudis had partially achieved their goal of using the Taliban as a vessel to spread their Islamist message, while expanding their influence in Afghanistan.⁵⁰

The Iranians, who opposed the Taliban, were deeply concerned about the expansion of Pakistani and Saudi influence in Afghanistan, a vital country that shared a long border with Iran. In addition, Iran’s population is approximately 90 percent Shiite Muslim and the Taliban adhered to a very strict form of Sunni Islam which was virulently anti-Shiite. The Taliban strongly denounced all Shiites including Iran’s Shiite government and populace, hoping that they would eventually attack Iran with the goal of converting Iran’s population to Sunni Islam.⁵¹ Indeed, in the late 1990s Iran and the Taliban almost went to war after the Taliban killed nine Iranian diplomats in the Afghan city of Mazar-i Sharif.⁵²

During the Taliban’s rise to power, Russia’s government and those of several of the Central Asian republics, most of which were largely

anti-Islamist, were threatened by the potential spread of the Taliban's version of Islamism into Afghanistan. The Russian government opposed the expansion of Pakistan's political and economic influence into Afghanistan, while it did not want the majority-Muslim populations within or near its borders to become catalyzed by the Taliban's Islamism in such a way that those Muslim populations would revolt against the Russians. The governments of several of the Central Asian republics had similar concerns.⁵³

The Taliban and Mazar-i Sharif

By the time of Kabul's fall to the Taliban in late September 1996, the Taliban had control of 22 of Afghanistan's 31 provinces.⁵⁴ The Taliban used the climatically cold and wintry period from September 1996 until May 1997 to consolidate its power and resources in Kabul and the other parts of Afghanistan that it controlled. In May of 1997, the Taliban began its major offensive on Afghanistan's northern cities and provinces, including the city of Mazar-i Sharif in the province of Balkh.⁵⁵ In the time leading to the Taliban's attack on Mazar-i Sharif, that city had been virtually untouched by Afghanistan's wars. Mazar-i Sharif's protected status was largely due to the effective leadership of the ethnic Uzbek Afghan warlord General Rashid Dostum, who was a skilled, courageous, and charismatic politician, military tactician, and soldier. In addition to maintaining peace, stability, and relatively good governance in the ethnically diverse Mazar-i Sharif, Dostum led a province with fairly effective health and educational systems, including Balkh University in Mazar-i Sharif, which had several thousand students and was the only university that was operating in Afghanistan at the time. Women and men in that area had significant freedom to dress as they desired and before the Taliban's entry into the region, Islamic law did not play a large role there. Mazar-i Sharif and northern Afghanistan are also important because of their resources and the city's symbolic value. While most of Afghanistan's population lives in the southern portions of the country, 60 percent of Afghanistan's agricultural resources and 80 percent of its former industry and mineral and gas deposits are in the northern areas, including Mazar-i Sharif itself. During much of the twentieth century, various Afghan governments' successes or failures in state-building and economic development depended on their control of the country's northern regions.⁵⁶ While the site of the tomb of Islam's fourth caliph, Ali, a figure who is greatly admired by Sunnis and Shiites, is disputed (at least five different places are thought to be the site of his tomb), Mazar-i Sharif is considered by some Muslims to be one of those possible sites.⁵⁷ One possible tomb of Ali, who was the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, is located at the city's blue mosque, which is one of the most beautiful in Afghanistan

and is a major pilgrimage site for Shiite Muslims.⁵⁸ Balkh, which was an ancient city near Mazar-i Sharif, is the city where Zoroaster (ca. 628 BCE–ca. 551 BCE), the founder of Zoroastrianism, one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions, is believed to have lived, and is thought to be the birth city of one of Sufi Islam's most renowned poets, Jalal al-Din Rumi (ca. 1207–73). With a knowledge of their history and the relatively beneficent rule of Rashid Dostum, the ethnically and linguistically diverse residents of Mazar-i Sharif and the province of Balkh had lived harmoniously.⁵⁹

In May 1997, the Taliban overpowered the various forces that had the task of defending Mazar-i Sharif, and the ethnically-Pashtun Taliban moved quickly and with great confidence as they disarmed a large number of ethnically-Uzbek and Hazara soldiers in the area. The Taliban captured mosques, imposed the full force of strict Sharia law, and closed the university and other schools, with the hope of eventually opening their own schools that provided education to men from an exclusively Islamist perspective.⁶⁰ In late May 1997, there was a heated argument in Mazar-i Sharif between some members of the Taliban and some Hazaras who refused to be disarmed. The argument escalated to a physical altercation and as word spread of the Hazaras' resistance, large numbers of residents of Mazar-i Sharif ran into the streets to fight against the Taliban. This massive revolt resulted in the deaths of 600 members of the Taliban, and 10 members of the Taliban's leadership were captured or killed. The members of the Taliban, virtually all of whom were from the southern part of Afghanistan and were wholly unfamiliar with Mazar-i Sharif's streets and the geography of the Balkh region, were severely hampered by their lack of knowledge of the area. This began a string of Taliban defeats in several parts of Afghanistan as the various warlords who opposed the Taliban fought hard against Taliban rule.

Beginning in late May 1997, the Taliban were either defeated or severely threatened in seven northern provinces of Afghanistan, in areas near and around Kabul, and at some strategic roadways, passes, and bridges in southern Afghanistan. These were some of the Taliban's worst defeats since they had emerged more than two years earlier. In over two months of fighting, between May and July 1997, more than 3,000 members of the Taliban had been killed or wounded and another 3,000 had been taken prisoner. Approximately 800 Pakistanis who were aiding the Taliban had been killed or captured, while numerous members of the groups opposing the Taliban had been killed or wounded.⁶¹ Throughout the rest of 1997, horrific warfare racked Afghanistan, with the Taliban retaining control of much of the country, while their opponents made often powerful forays against them. In addition, the various countries which had interests in Afghanistan, such as Russia and various Central Asian countries, continued to support their proxies in the country.⁶²

The Taliban, Bamiyan, and Mazar-i Sharif

During this period, one of several regions of Afghanistan where the Taliban focused its attention was the city and province of Bamiyan where a very high percentage of the population is ethnic Hazara. The majority of Hazaras are Shiites and they speak Hazaragi, a Persianized language with a large number of Mongol words, which is different from Pashto, the language of the Pashtuns.⁶³ A high percentage of the Hazaras live within the rugged central mountainous core of Afghanistan which covers approximately 50,000 square kilometers, inside and outside of Bamiyan province. This large region, which covers or touches on several of Afghanistan's provinces, is called the Hazarajat or the Land of the Hazaras. Approximately 9 percent of Afghanistan is Hazara, while 42 percent is comprised of Pashtuns.⁶⁴ Also, during and after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the mujahideen intentionally excluded the Hazaras from their group for largely religious reasons; virtually all of the members of the mujahideen were Sunnis and these Sunnis viewed the Shiites, including the Hazaras, as Muslim heretics, who could not be permitted to hold any kind of political power.⁶⁵

In addition, many Hazara women played a significant role in various aspects of professional life in Hazarajat, to which the Taliban vociferously objected based on their much more conservative interpretation of Islamic texts. For example, several members of the Hazara Hizb-i Wahadat political party were women, while Hazara women played significant roles in the United Nations, worked as university professors, and had fought alongside of Hazara men against the Taliban. The Hazaras, while Muslim, were proud that their region had been a center of Buddhist religion and culture in ancient times and had also been an active point on the silk road. These historic, cultural, linguistic, religious, ethnic, and regional differences were some of the factors that played an enormous role in the hostile relationships between the majority-Pashtun Taliban and the Hazaras as the Taliban attempted to capture Bamiyan and the rest of Hazarajat during the late 1990s.⁶⁶

As the Taliban began its siege of Bamiyan beginning in August 1997, many Hazaras were starving. They frequently raided Taliban convoys for wheat, while living meagerly on foods such as roots, berries, and potatoes that grew on the stony and mountainous land of Hazarajat, only 10 percent of which was cultivable.⁶⁷ As part of its siege, the Taliban had closed all the roads leading to Bamiyan from the south, west, and east. The Hazaras could not receive any relief from the north because of the warfare in which the Taliban was engaged there, added to the fact that the heavy snows made those roads impassable to Bamiyan, a city that stood at an elevation of 7,500 feet. Because of the Taliban's blockade, approximately one million Hazaras in most of Hazarajat were hungry and suffering near-catastrophic

food shortages. As had been the Taliban's policy and practice during most of its rule, its leadership refused the United Nations' offers of assistance, in this case to provide food supplies to the Hazaras, on the grounds that the United Nations was a Western, anti-Islamic puppet that was attempting to assist the Taliban's enemies while seeking to destroy the Taliban and all of Islam.⁶⁸

On August 8, 1998, the Hazara forces in Mazar-i Sharif, which is roughly 150 miles north of Bamiyan, found themselves surrounded by the Taliban. The Taliban then moved into Mazar-i Sharif and engaged in a two-day massacre of possibly thousands of Hazaras in that city. The massacre was catalyzed by the hostility that the Sunni Taliban had against the Shiite Hazaras and by the Taliban's desire to exact revenge against the Hazaras who had, until early August 1998, largely succeeded in defending themselves against the Taliban.⁶⁹ While the vast majority of Sunni Muslims in the world utterly condemn the killing of Shiites, according to the Taliban's interpretation of the Quran and Hadith their killing of the Hazara Shiites was justified because, in the Taliban's view, the Shiites are heretics.⁷⁰ At the same time, the Iranian government had been providing their fellow-Shiite Hazara neighbors in Afghanistan military and other forms of aid to support them in their struggles against the Taliban. The Taliban, through their massacre of the Hazaras, could have also intended to send the Iranians the message that the Taliban were prepared to deliver brutal punishment to their Shiite enemies.⁷¹

The Taliban wanted to cleanse northern Afghanistan, and eventually the entire country, of Shiite Muslims. Soon after the Taliban captured Mazar-i Sharif, the Taliban's mullahs declared from several of that city's mosques that the Shiites had three choices: they could convert to Sunni Islam, leave for Iran, or be killed. The Taliban also prohibited Shiite mullahs from leading prayer services in any of the mosques in territories under the Taliban's control. In the midst of the Taliban's killing of thousands of Hazara Shiites in the areas in and around Mazar-i Sharif, sometime in August or early September 1998, the Taliban killed nine Iranian diplomats who were working in the Iranian Consulate in Mazar-i Sharif.⁷² These acts by the Taliban, which almost led to a war between Iran and the Taliban, were religiously motivated (i.e., against Shiites) and also constituted the Taliban's revenge against Iran for its continued support of the Hazaras and other Afghan enemies of the Taliban.⁷³

The Taliban and al-Qaida under American Attack

As the Taliban was making its military advances, some members of al-Qaida (two of whose leaders, Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, were in Afghanistan) staged massive, violent militant attacks against the United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998, which killed

and wounded large numbers of people. As a result of that aggression, on August 20, 1998 the United States launched missile attacks against Bin Laden, Zawahiri, and al-Qaida's training camps in Afghanistan. The United States' attacks were largely ineffectual in that they did not succeed in killing Bin Laden, Zawahiri or, apparently, any important leaders within al-Qaida. In addition, the damage to the training camps was limited and most or all of the al-Qaida members in those camps may have escaped unscathed.⁷⁴ The attacks against these sites in Afghanistan also stoked the existing frustrations of many Muslims against the United States.⁷⁵

The Taliban, who were already vehemently anti-American, were deeply angered about the United States' attacks on their soil, which they viewed as heinous encroachments on Afghanistan, 90 percent of which they controlled at the time. In this spirit, the Taliban organized large anti-American street demonstrations protesting the United States' attacks on al-Qaida and the United States' foreign policy toward the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Mullah Omar criticized United States President Bill Clinton personally, "If the attack on Afghanistan is Clinton's personal decision, then he has done it to divert the world's and the American people's attention from that shameful White House affair [with Monica Lewinsky] that has proved Clinton is a liar and man devoid of decency and honor."⁷⁶ Mullah Omar also stated that Bin Laden and al-Qaida were guests of the Taliban and the Afghan people and that the Taliban would never surrender Bin Laden to the United States, adding, "America itself is the biggest terrorist in the world."⁷⁷

On September 13, 1998, roughly three weeks after the American missile attacks on Afghanistan, the Taliban launched a series of military operations in its successful bid to conquer Bamiyan. Most likely in an effort to improve the Taliban's battered image outside of Afghanistan, Mullah Omar ordered the Taliban soldiers to restrain themselves against Hazara civilians. In spite of this, numerous Hazara civilians were killed in Bamiyan.⁷⁸ Soon after that, the Taliban destroyed two large and historic statues of the Buddha in Bamiyan that may have been 2,000 years old. The Taliban stated that it was compelled to destroy these statues because Islam forbids all images and any representations that could lead to idolatry or idol-worship.⁷⁹

The Taliban's conquest of Bamiyan and the fact that it had come to control 90 percent of Pakistan by that point, together with the negative perceptions of the Taliban on the part of most people outside the country, led to a regional escalation of pressures within Afghanistan. First, there was danger of war between Iran and the Taliban, while there emerged an increased risk of Taliban-style Islamism spreading into various other parts of the region, including Central Asia. Second, many governments outside of Afghanistan were opposed to the Taliban's treatment of women, as the United States government tried to focus on the killing or capture of Bin Laden, while repeatedly failing to persuade the Taliban government to

surrender him to the United States. Third, in the wake of the Taliban's brutality, even the Saudi government, which had been a strong supporter of the Taliban, withdrew its diplomatic representatives from Afghanistan and ended its official funding of the Taliban.⁸⁰

The Taliban, Conflict in Afghanistan, and the United Nations

Partly as a result of the member governments of the United Nations Security Council being frustrated with the Taliban's refusal to create a broad-based government that would include Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns and a larger representation of various ethnic and religious groups within Afghanistan, the Taliban's exclusionary policies toward Afghanistan's women, and its continued use of substantial amounts of physical force in much of Afghanistan, the Security Council passed Resolution 1214 with respect to the Taliban government in early December 1998.⁸¹ This resolution raised the distinct possibility of future sanctions against the Taliban, because (1) the Taliban's actions violated the United Nations' understanding of Human Rights; (2) the Taliban promoted the trafficking of drugs, especially opium and heroin; and (3) the group did not accept a cease-fire, which it had previously been urged to do. This resolution was ratified after two other resolutions condemning the Taliban had been passed earlier that year, which were Resolutions 1189 and 1193. These resolutions together with the strong criticism from many other governments in the world – with the exception of Pakistan's government – demonstrated the Taliban government's alienation from a wide variety of other governments.

This level of condemnation exacerbated several other hardships that the Taliban government was already facing, such as a massive drought and dissension within the Taliban's ranks. The hunger that the drought in Afghanistan had caused led to enormous problems for the Taliban as it attempted to rule the country in that it increased the already-existing discontent with the Taliban's rule in different parts of Afghanistan. These hardships festered throughout much of 1999.⁸² During January 2000, the members of the Taliban who were assigned to guard Afghanistan's money market stole \$200,000 from it, leading to a series of events that led to its closing. In a protest against the Taliban's drive to draft men into its ranks, its levying a sharp rise in taxes, and its appropriation of money for its own use and that of the central government instead of that of local governments, several hundred tribal leaders from eastern Afghanistan forced the Taliban to replace local governors. During the same period, more than 2,000 people held an anti-Taliban demonstration in the majority-Pashtun city of Khost. These and other events occurred while (1) international pressure on the Taliban

mounted; (2) the United Nations tried to broker a cease-fire with the Taliban; (3) other groups in Afghanistan put pressure on the Taliban; and (4) the Pakistani government continued to support the Taliban.⁸³

This was largely the picture on September 11, 2001, when al-Qaida attacked New York City and Washington, DC, and subsequently on October 7, 2001, when the United States government initiated Operation Enduring Freedom within Afghanistan, whose goal was to defeat the Taliban and al-Qaida and help institute a democratic government in Afghanistan that would be friendly to the United States.⁸⁴ Since that time, Taliban forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan have fought vigorously against their enemies, including United States military forces, anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan, as well as the Pakistani military and local anti-Taliban militias in Pakistan.⁸⁵

The Mujahideen, the Taliban, and al-Qaida

The decision on the part of governments of various majority-Muslim countries to encourage Islamists from their countries to go to Afghanistan to fight as mujahideen in the war against the Soviet occupation turned the madrasahs of the Pashtun areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan into international universities for the teaching of Islamist ideas to Muslims of different ethnicities. These Filipino, Uzbek, Uighur, Algerian, Saudi, Egyptian, and Kuwaiti Muslims (to name just a few) came to Afghanistan with a common Islamist ideology and a desire to fight against what they considered to be the atheistic and anti-Islamic Soviets. In addition to the continued education they received in Islam, the United States' CIA and Pakistan's ISI trained them in a variety of military and guerrilla tactics which they used against the Soviets and which some of them used against the United States and Pakistan after the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan. These Islamists formed strong links which were continually reinforced by their similar Islamic beliefs and practices, their common military and guerrilla training, the large amounts of time they spent with each other, and their battles against a common enemy in the form of the Soviet Union.⁸⁶

The policies of the countries that supported the gathering of Islamists in Afghanistan for the purpose of fighting the Soviets there could be considered shortsighted, since many of those Islamists – including Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri – came to oppose the very regimes that supported their war effort against the Soviets. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the United States' National Security Adviser under President Jimmy Carter, made a statement that represents the stance of many policymakers at the time, "What was more important in the world view of history? The Taliban or the fall of the Soviet Empire? A few stirred-up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?"⁸⁷ These priorities and the substantial

reduction of American aid for and interest in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal from the country helped generate a situation that led to the establishment of al-Qaida, the Taliban, and other Islamist groups that opposed Western countries and the governments of most countries in the majority-Muslim world. Samuel Huntington provided a helpful summary of the situation in Afghanistan at the end of the Soviet occupation:

The war left behind an uneasy coalition of Islamist organizations intent on promoting Islam against all non-Muslim forces. It also left a legacy of expert and experienced fighters, training camps and logistical facilities, elaborate trans-Islam[ic] networks of personal and organization[al] relationships, a substantial amount of military equipment including three hundred to five hundred unaccounted for Stinger missiles, and, most important, a heady sense of power and self-confidence over what had been achieved and a driving desire to move on to other victories.⁸⁸

Largely because of the policies of the United States and its allies, Afghanistan and the Pashtun areas of Pakistan became crucial areas for the training and support of a worldwide Islamist militancy.

Pakistan, the United States, and the Taliban

Even after the United States began its post-September 11, 2001 military activities in Afghanistan (under the name “Operation Enduring Freedom”), Pakistan maintained a strong alliance with the Taliban for some of the same reasons that it had supported that organization and Pakistan’s other proxies in Afghanistan, including the mujahideen, for many years already.⁸⁹ During the period of Operation Enduring Freedom, various Pakistani governmental leaders have wanted to use the Taliban as a force that would form a bulwark against the real or potential influence in Afghanistan of other countries such as Iran, India, Russia, and various Central Asian states.⁹⁰ While continuing to ally itself with the Taliban, the Pakistani government has also allied itself with one of the very countries that has sent tens of thousands of soldiers and spent over 300 billion dollars in its attempt to eliminate the Taliban – namely the United States.⁹¹ By aligning itself with the Taliban, the Pakistani government is making an attempt to use the Taliban to extend its influence in Afghanistan, and by aligning itself with the United States, the Pakistani government is attempting to place limits on the Taliban’s influence, because while members of Pakistan’s government want the Taliban to remain somewhat influential in Afghanistan (so that Pakistan can maintain a degree of influence in that country), members of the Pakistani government do not want the Taliban to become so powerful that it weakens or overthrows Pakistan’s largely secular government.⁹² After all, one of the Taliban’s many

goals is to overthrow Pakistan's secular government and replace it with what members of the Taliban believe to be a truly Islamic state.⁹³

At the same time, members of the Pakistani government want to limit the long-term influence of the United States in Afghanistan and nearby regions because they want to protect Pakistan from a variety of threats to Pakistan that a significant amount of American influence in the region could bring. One of these threats, from Pakistan's perspective, would be the increase of India's power as a result of a United States–India alliance. In the opinion of many Pakistanis, an increase in India's influence as a result of such an alliance could have a damaging effect on Pakistan's strength since many Pakistanis believe that the potential of Indian expansionism poses a direct military, political, and economic threat to Pakistan.⁹⁴

Pakistani government officials also have profoundly mixed feelings about the United States' drone attacks against Taliban positions in Pakistan. On the one hand, Pakistani officials want those attacks to be successful in that their effectiveness could reduce the Taliban's power in Pakistan, which would make that organization less of a threat to Pakistan's government. On the other hand, Pakistani officials know that every time the drone attacks kill non-Taliban civilians and children, this stokes the anger of many Pakistanis against their government and its alliance with the United States. At the same time, many Pakistanis are offended by the United States' drone attacks because they view them as encroachments on Pakistani sovereignty, as direct manifestations of the brutalities of American colonialism, and as causing the deaths of many non-Taliban Pakistani civilians.⁹⁵ Clearly, the Pakistani government is playing a series of double games between itself and the United States, on the one hand, and itself and the Taliban, on the other. In the midst of these circumstances, the Pakistani government is deploying an accommodationalist/oppositionalist approach to the Taliban. The Pakistani government is accommodating the Taliban in order to further its own regional interests while opposing that organization because an overly strong Taliban could overthrow the secular Pakistani government. In several respects, the Pakistani government's accommodationalist/oppositionalist approach to the Taliban and other Islamist groups which oppose it is similar to the Saudi government's accommodationalist/oppositionalist approach to the Islamists who oppose it, including the fact that both the Pakistani and Saudi governments are attempting to use the Islamists to their own political and religious advantage, while trying to contain the Islamist groups' influence so that they do not overthrow those governments.

In any case, Afghanistan and Pakistan are two of several countries that are of crucial importance to the United States and its allies because if the Taliban and its associates, such as al-Qaida, are able to maintain stable and durable bases in Afghanistan and/or Pakistan, they could use them to launch multiple potentially devastating attacks against Western interests and to

spearhead their own militant and political activities against various governments in the region, including Pakistan's government. Yet, it may be that the United States and its allies could find themselves in a lose-lose situation. That is, if the United States and its allies pursue the war in Afghanistan, they may continue to spend enormous amounts of money while seeing thousands of their soldiers being killed and injured as those allies make little progress against the Islamists. Yet, if the United States and its allies withdraw from Afghanistan, a situation may emerge there and in Pakistan where the Taliban and its affiliates could regroup and launch large numbers of attacks against Western and regional interests for the foreseeable future, with the hope of eventually creating a global Islamic state. Given this scenario, the United States and other Western countries may be in a Sisyphean situation for which there is no viable long-term solution.

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Conclusion

History is a battlefield. It's constantly being fought over because the past controls the present. History is the present. That's why every generation writes it anew. But what most people think of as history is its end product, myth.

E.L. Doctorow¹

Members of some religio-political groups which are involved in resistance to the status quo and want to effect change – such as certain fundamentalists including the Islamists in this study – have some common characteristics in their organizations and ideologies. For example, such groups often draw on existing *organizational networks*, such as mosques, churches, temples, and other existing religious associations that can enable them to train leaders and adherents for their specific movements. In the case of the Islamists, groups such as Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaida, Hamas, Pakistan's Jama'at-i Islami, and the Taliban routinely use mosques to train their organizations' leaders while educating and mobilizing their rank-and-file members. Such resistance groups which engage in violent acts assert that their actions are based on *religious justifications for militant acts* and that these and their other behaviors are morally justified based on these groups' interpretations of their own religions' sacred texts and histories. Members of such religio-political groups that engage in militant acts believe that they are engaged in a *cosmic war* between the forces of good and evil, where the members of the resistance groups maintain that they and their ideals represent good while those whom they oppose manifest evil. As many Islamists, for example, recognize their own sins and shortcomings, they

maintain an absolute belief in the rightness of their cause and the utterly wrongheaded nature of that of their enemies, and that they as true Muslims are engaged in a God-ordained global war which they as God's soldiers will finally win, as they will eventually create a global Islamic state where everyone will be Muslim and governed by Islamic law. In this vein, similar to the Islamists, members of other militant religio-political groups, while also believing that they are engaged in a cosmic war, view the members of their group who are engaged in militant acts as *religious soldiers* who are engaged in an ultimately triumphant struggle against that group's enemies.

At the same time, members of certain religio-political groups, in a manner that is similar to some other religious persons, have an *all-encompassing worldview*, which involves the belief that the sacred figures, texts, and history of their own religion provide the ultimate guide to every aspect of their lives and should provide the ultimate guide to the lives of everyone in the world. For the Islamists, this is comprised of the belief that the Quran, the Hadith, the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and certain aspects of Islamic history provide a single monolithic set of standards which they and everyone else should follow. Many members of religio-political groups who are involved in these struggles believe that the *timeline of their sacred struggle is vast*, extending for thousands of years or even eternally.² The Islamists adhere to such a worldview; they believe that if God does not grant them victory in the near future, he will grant it to future Muslims at some point, maybe even in the very distant future.³

Yet, all Muslims, including the Islamists, believe that their actions are guided by a set of discourses that preceded them. According to the anthropologist Talal Asad,

A tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history. These discourses relate conceptually to *a past* (when the practice was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and *a future* (how the point of that practice can best be secured in the short or long term, or why it should be modified or abandoned), through *a present* (how it is linked to other practices, institutions, and social conditions). An Islamic discursive tradition is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present.⁴

Thus, Islamists, like other Muslims and other religious persons, maintain a set of interpretations that are based on their understandings of the past which they believe should guide their actions in the present and the future. Indeed, the Islamists believe Islam's sacred texts sanctify their actions. In view of the relative strength of Islamist groups and the various factors that

catalyze them, they, like other fundamentalist groups in other religions, may have an effect on the foreign and domestic policies of Western and other countries for many years to come.

Notes

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